THE ULTIMATE REVIEW OF THE YEAR

CLASSIC ROCK

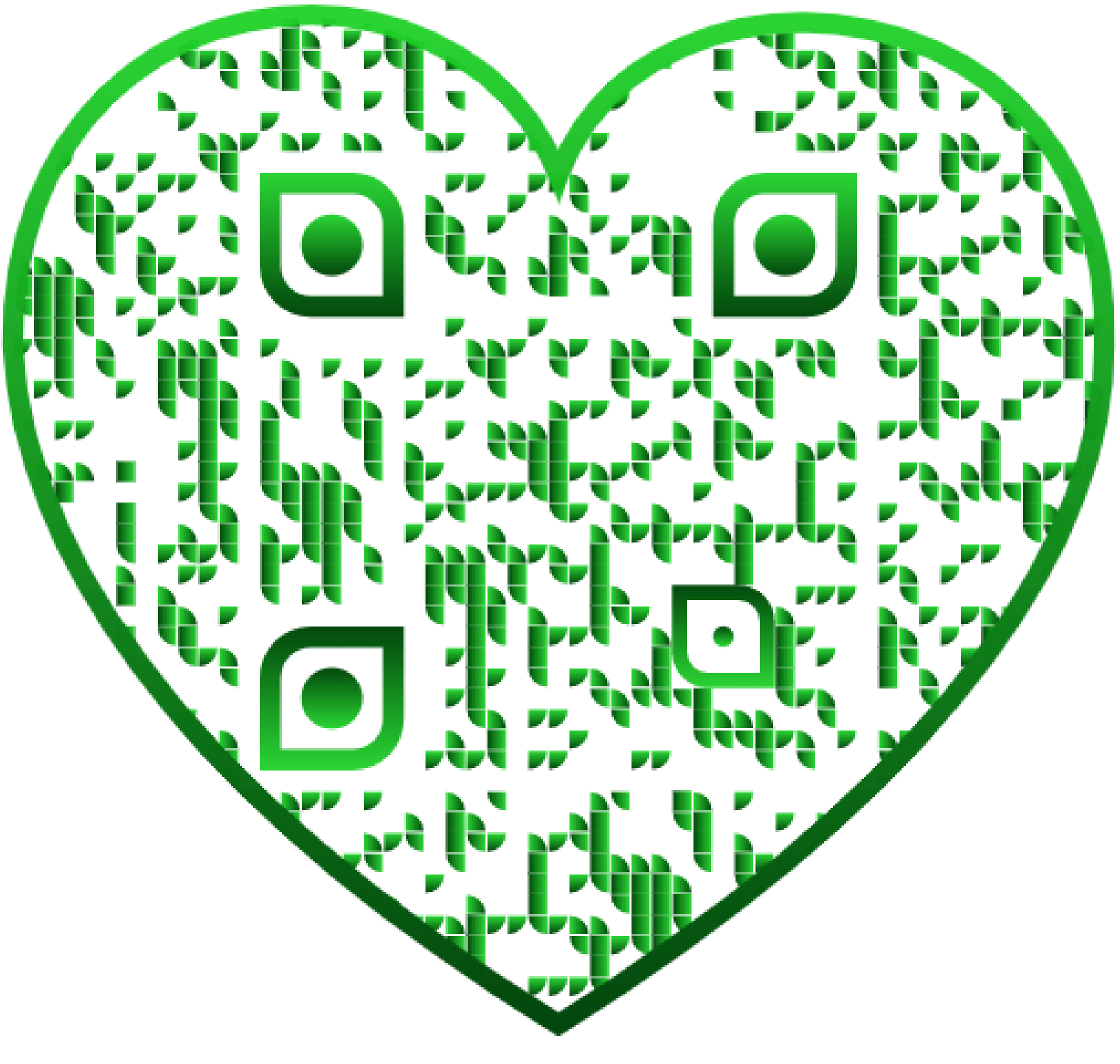
THE BEST OF 2020

THE YEAR IN ROCK

TOP 50 ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

AC/DC FISH **KEITH RICHARDS** THE STRUTS **UFO** THE PRETENDERS **MASSIVE WAGONS** METALLICA **JIMI HENDRIX** STONE TEMPLE PILOTS *and more!*

FUTURE
ISSUE 283



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JOSH CHEUSE/PRESS

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KAI R JOACHIM/PRESS

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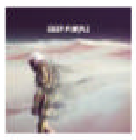

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Welcome to the final issue of 2020. What a year it's been, eh? When I was writing a similar editorial this time 12 months ago there was no way I (or anyone else for that matter!) could have predicted how 2020 would pan out. It's the understatement of the century to say that it's thrown everyone for a loop. Over the page we turn the spotlight on that in relation to the world of rock.

But the more things change, the more things stay the same (thankfully). So it's time for our annual look at what went down in rock over the past 12 months – the new albums and songs that got us excited, the reissues that put the spotlight on old favourites, and much more. We caught up with rock's prime movers and shakers: Brian and Angus from 'DC on their incredible return; Lars Ulrich tells us how he's spent the year in lockdown (and we eavesdropped on a conversation between him and Diamond Head's Brian Tatler); we talked to Fish about retirement, grabbed Massive Wagons to tell us about making the UK Top 10, and more.

So, for some respite from the madness that surrounds us in the real world, please sit back, relax and join us in celebrating the Year In Rock 2020. And from all of us here at *Classic Rock*, we hope you have a brilliant Christmas break and a very happy – and most importantly – healthy 2021.

Siân Llewellyn, Editor

PS: Make sure your new year starts in the right fashion by subscribing to *Classic Rock* (you'll save money and never miss an issue!). Turn to p50 for our best deal.

THE COVER: VARIOUS (SEE PAGE 6)

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This month's contributors

MICHAEL HANN
Michael has spent most of 2020 interviewing the musicians of the NWOBHM for a forthcoming book. He can now speak at length about homemade pyro disasters, satanic rituals on Stanton Moor, and the time Angel Witch played an East German variety show. This issue he looks back on UFO's live classic *Strangers In The Night* (page 64).

DAVE STEINFELD
Dave has been writing about music for the past 20 years, and has interviewed everyone from Andy Williams to Alice Cooper, from Norah Jones to Ne-Yo, from Patti Smith to Curt Smith. He has written for all the major American radio networks and is on the voting body of the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. Dave is thrilled to be making his *CR* debut with a piece on one of his favourite bands, The Pretenders (p58).

PAUL ELLIOTT
Paul Elliott has written two cover stories on AC/DC for *Classic Rock* this year, the first to mark the 40th anniversary of *Back In Black*, the second to celebrate the band's triumphant return with *Power Up*. This issue he talks to Angus Young and Brian Johnson about the making of the latter album and their 2020 return to business (p42).

Sam Fender's socially distanced concert in Newcastle.

The Year That Was 2020

As we reach the end of a surreal year, dominated by the effects of covid-19, there are reasons to be cheerful – including new music, and renewed appreciation of gigs and those who make it all possible.

Words: **Polly Glass**

We didn't expect to be writing this. Usually at this end-of-year juncture this spot in the magazine would be filled by a snappy hit-list of major events from the past 12 months, including A-list reunions and notable splits, festival highlights and mega-shows.

That didn't feel quite right this time. Not least because many of the sort of things we'd ordinarily pick out simply didn't happen. For the first time since *Classic Rock*'s inception, the rock lover's diary has looked *completely* different: No festivals. No tours. None of the face-to-face activity we'd typically take as a given.

Instead, ever since we took our laptops home back in March ("Three weeks!" we said. Oh how quaint that seems now), we've lived through our screens. A whole new language has evolved: terms such as 'social distancing', 'Zoom fatigue', 'WFH' (working from home) and 'the new normal' have become commonplace. I've found myself warming up interviewees with the question: "How's your apocalypse going?"

The live entertainment industry has been shaken in a way that no one could have ever imagined. The pandemic has wiped out whole calendars, decimated livelihoods and cast shadows of doubt over the months, even years, to come. More pertinently, it's claimed lives. The lives of people in the public eye and many more behind closed doors. It's wrought immeasurable stress on families, individuals and communities worldwide. And all with a backdrop of political unrest, social division, and – in the case of America – an historic presidential election that gripped onlookers the world over.

Like we say, doing a regular 12-month retrospective didn't feel right. But a morbid sob-fest? That didn't feel right either.

Because actually our end-of-2020 edition isn't so different from previous years. There was still music – *so* much music. Our Top 50 Albums Of 2020 (starting on page 23) is a killer list, and the fact that we were genuinely spoiled for choice says a great deal about the prevailing power of creativity, pandemic or no pandemic. As someone told us the other day: "People will always be creative."

So this issue is about celebration, because even with everything that's happened due to covid-19 there *is* a lot to celebrate. But there is also no way around the fact that it's been a really weird fucking year.

So let's just say it now. 2020: *Oh. My. God.*

In an age where so much was happening online anyway (from internet shopping to the rise and rise of Netflix, Spotify, YouTube etc), it's worth reminding ourselves of the scale and impact of live entertainment – including rock gigs. According to Plasa (the international body for those who supply technologies and services to the event and entertainment industries), the sector delivers an estimated £100billion to the UK economy and employs around 600,000 people. Elsewhere, using statistics published in February, it was announced that the UK's creative industries contribute "nearly £13million to the national economy every hour".

For bands and crews accustomed to the road, as a way of life and a primary source of income, the effective absence of this sector has been a shock.

"Apart from the fact that it's financially crippling, I don't think I've spent this much time in one place ever, in my entire life," King King frontman Alan Nimmo says. "I'm climbing the walls. I think we should be allowed to write off 2020 and be able to stay a year younger. It will be a relief to see it over, but only in the sense that normal service will resume in 2021."

Noticing my mud-free boots by the door back in September – and the lack of wristbands, soggy

SAM FENDER: GETTY

Joe Bonamassa livestream (with cardboard cut-out audience) in Nashville.

notebook pages and energy bar wrappers at the bottom of my backpack – I realised that this had been my first festival-free summer in a decade. Without wellies. Minus mud. Sans sunburn combined with that gross, congealed mess of sun cream, mascara and the unidentified warm liquid someone threw over me after Iron Maiden one year at Download.

In the cold (or rather, warm and dry) light of day, we had a rare chance to consider, objectively, how much we actually miss this stuff. So much had already migrated to digital settings, even in pre-covid times, after all, and doom-sayers have long bemoaned the demise of live rock'n'roll.

Now maybe we're a hardened bunch. Maybe our brains have been pickled by years of loud distorted music, accompanied by unrelenting rain and industrial quantities of beer/wine/poison of choice. But despite the less desirable elements of British festivals (and God knows they're not hard to spot) and the changes in gig attendance overall, it hasn't been difficult to agree that life without live music is a much greyer affair. And it could still be a while before we see it return in a meaningful way.

"People have been thinking these livestreams are gonna be a stop-gap measure," Low Cut Connie singer Adam Weiner told us. "But things are so fucked up here. There's no way we're gonna be able to tour until probably at the earliest late 2021, and anyone in America who says otherwise is crazy. That being said, I am so artistically turned on by this livestreaming format."

With many artists using their confinement as a chance to branch out (into interviews, stand-up, political chat, aerobics… seriously, Low Cut Connie have *literally* done all those things), we've been encouraged to consider how much, if at all, the essence of live rock'n'roll can be recreated through a screen. It's not as if in-the-flesh live music is always roses and cold beer. Often it's mud and lukewarm cider.

As anyone who's trudged through storms, arse-deep in mud, in search of a monsoon-free camping spot at a festival knows, the UK is not built for outdoor events. We're a small island nation surrounded by sea. We know the weather is shit. The bands know the weather is shit. During 2019's festival season I lost count of the sun-kissed American artists expressing their awe at the soggy masses they played to – still there, still cheering with genuine delight, even as the wind howled and the rain turned horizontal.

This year those memories got me thinking. Doesn't it say something about the transportive power of live music, if we're willing to put up with apocalyptic rainfall, mud and freely urinating strangers in order to get a prolonged dose of it? If we actually obtain real pleasure from live music, *because* of those conditions?

There's a kind of community spirit that's perversely unique to roughing-it circumstances. Rock festivals are visceral experiences, mud bath or not. We miss tearing across a muddy field to catch the start of Skindred, or gaping in awe at Rammstein's latest pyrotechnic assault. We miss watching brilliant new groups lay waste to rock-friendly boozers. We miss Friday nights out that involve amp stacks, plastic pints and loud guitars.

"This is the longest I've been off the road in, what, twenty years, man," Corey Taylor told us. "But at the same time, obviously I don't have it nearly as bad as some people do. People are losing their jobs, they can't pay their bills. So me and my wife have been trying to give to as many charities as we can."

If there's one thing we've learned over the past 12 months, it's that the people in our world are a resourceful bunch. Bands have written music, made records, performed livestreams, played socially distanced gigs and more. And you, as fans, have shown massive support.

"Doing the livestreams this year has been a life saver," Grace Bond of blues rockers When Rivers Meet says. "It's kept us going, and we're so appreciative of everyone who's come and watched us online on a Saturday night. The superfans out there, proper music fans, they're the ones who've got us through lockdown."

We don't harbour unwarranted illusions about rock. It's not the NHS, welfare sector, food banks or the education system. Music doesn't save lives, in a physical sense. But through everything, it's been there for us. It's helped preserve our mental health. It's the thing that decorates time, whether through protest songs or feel-good escapism. It might not be one of life's base ingredients, but it sure makes life taste so much better.

It's only rock'n'roll, but we like it.

JOE BONAMASSA: CHRIS WOOD

This month The Dirt was compiled by Malcolm Dome, Polly Glass, Fraser Lewry, Dave Ling, Johnny Sharp, Henry Yates

RIP

Thank you
and good night.

James Broad
Died October 27, 2020

The lead singer, guitarist and songwriter of UK power-pop band Silver Sun – once described in *Classic Rock* as "enigmatic, quirky and catchy as a cold" – has lost a battle with bowel cancer. Broad formed the group in London in 1995, and released their self-titled debut two years later. After a long period of hiatus a fifth record, *Switzerland,* was self-issued during lockdown. He was 50.

Paul Travis
August 21, 1947 – October 13, 2020

Oldham-born Paul Travis was a guitarist with the melodic hard rockers Liar, who released two albums (*Straight From The Hip* and *Set The World On Fire*) in the late 70s and toured with Slade and UFO. He also featured on their previously shelved third record, *Sunset Plaza Drive*, released belatedly earlier this year. The 73-year-old succumbed to a heart attack caused by a pulmonary embolism.

Bones Hillman
Died November 7, 2020

Midnight Oil are mourning the passing of their bass player, who they describe as a "brilliant musical comrade with a beautiful voice and a wicked sense of humour". Born Wayne Stevens, Hillman joined up with the group in 1987. He had kept his bandmates in the dark regarding an ongoing treatment for cancer until fairly recently. He was 62 years old.

Billy Joe Shaver
August 16, 1939 – October 28, 2020

The Texan-born singer-songwriter has died from a stroke at 81. Mentioned by Bob Dylan in *I Feel A Change Comin' On*, Shaver is regarded as a pioneer of the outlaw country movement, and his material was covered by Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, Kris Kristofferson, Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson, Tanya Tucker, the Allman Brothers and more.

Viola Smith
November 29, 1912 – October 21, 2020

Pioneering drummer Viola Smith has passed away just weeks before her 108th birthday. Born Viola Schmitz, she was one of – if not *the* – first female professional percussionists in popular music. Her big break came via a radio show in the 1930s, and she went on to form an all-female orchestra called The Coquettes. She had been suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

Helen Reddy
October 25, 1941 – September 29, 2020

Australian-American singer, songwriter, author, actress, and activist Helen ▷

Ken Hensley

August 24, 1945 – November 4, 2020

The original keyboard player and second guitarist with Uriah Heep has died unexpectedly at the age of 75 following a short illness. During a ten-year stay, Ken Hensley wrote many of Heep's signature songs, including *Easy Livin', Lady In Black, Stealin', Sunrise* and *Wise Man*. In a career that spanned six decades, he also played with The Gods, Toe Fat, Blackfoot, W.A.S.P. and Cinderella, among others, and also had solo projects and his own band Live Fire.

He was born Kenneth William David Hensley in the south-east London suburb of Plumstead, and the family moved to Stevenage in Hertfordshire shortly afterwards. He first picked up a guitar at the age of 12. After spells with several prototype groups, he formed The Gods with future Rolling Stones guitarist Mick Taylor in 1965. Their line-up would include such luminaries as Greg Lake, Jethro Tull's John Glasscock and two musicians who would later be his bandmates in Uriah Heep: bassist Paul Newton and drummer Lee Kerslake. After an album under the name Head Machine Hensley and Kerslake co-founded Toe Fat.

At Newton's invitation, Hensley joined Spice just before they became Uriah Heep in January 1970, playing Hammond B3 organ and backing up Mick Box's fiery guitar playing. Hensley also became a key writer and occasional lead vocalist for Heep. The band tinkered with their sound, but the arrivals in 1971 of Kerslake and bass player Gary Thain cemented their best-loved line-up, fronted by the effervescent David Byron.

> **"I've had such a wonderful life, way beyond anything I ever dreamed of achieving."**
> **Ken Hensley**

Although Hensley's lyrics spoke in otherworldly rhymes, he once cheekily confided: "Most of my songs are about failed romances. And I always blame them on the woman. As the writer that's your prerogative."

In 1972 Heep released their celebrated fourth album, *Demons And Wizards*, followed by a string of successors – *The Magician's Birthday, Sweet Freedom* and *Wonderworld* – that placed them among the foremost rock bands of the era.

But behind the scenes things were not always so rosy. Hensley was an ambitious character. Despite the pair's shared history, his relationship with Kerslake soured, and the drummer believes that Ken had him edged out of the band.

"Ken was an unusual bloke," Kerslake told me years later. "Tell Ken to turn left and he'd always turn right. He was clever, but devious."

Box, now the band's last remaining original member, recalls that gradually Hensley "pulled away" from the others. "He had a separate set of friends," he comments now. "Ken had his own tour manager. And at one point Heep had one of the best lighting rigs in the world, but Ken had to have an extra set above him. He went on record as saying he was never friends with the band, it was a business arrangement. But of course what he brought to the table was fantastic and we achieved success we could only have dreamed of."

After Thain was dismissed for the heroin dependence that would take his life, in 1975 Heep brought in John Wetton, who played on *Return To Fantasy* and *High And Mighty*, before their long-term bassist Trevor Bolder joined in '77.

Hensley's addiction to cocaine only increased tension over the fact that his songs dominated the albums. The chasm between Hensley and producer, record label boss and manager Gerry Bron on one side and the other members of Heep soon became untenable.

"I didn't help the situation, because I never made any secret of the fact that I'd just bought a Ferrari or a Rolls-Royce or a new house," Hensley told me many years later.

Hensley resigned from the group in 1980, following a tenth anniversary tour.

Although thoroughly exhausted by the many line-up changes, Hensley traced the problems back to the loss of Thain. "When Gary died a piece of the puzzle went missing," he explained. "John Wetton was very talented but he didn't fill in the hole that Gary left. From then on it never worked. It continued to sound like Uriah Heep, but it certainly didn't feel like it."

Further explaining his decision, Hensley once said: "I was a drug addict and a complete mess. One of the reasons why I moved to the US in 1981 was to re-gather myself, lose my addiction and get my feet back on the ground. I thought it might take two or three years, but it ended up closer to fifteen."

Prior to leaving Heep, Hensley had recorded two well-regarded solo albums, *Proud Words On A Dusty Shelf* (1973) and *Eager To Please* ('75). Those were followed by the hit-and-miss *Free Spirit*.

"I was severely addicted to cocaine by then – I was lost," Hensley told me ▷

GETTY

Ken Hensley: "An incredible songwriter, guitarist and keyboard player," says Glenn Hughes.

Reddy, best known for her 1970s hits *I Am Woman* and *Angie Baby*, has passed away aged 78. She had been suffering from Addison's disease and dementia.

Max Merritt

30 April 1941 – 24 September 2020

New Zealander Max Merritt became a huge star with his band The Meteors in Australia during the 1960s, before relocating to the States. He passed away in California of Goodpasture's syndrome, a rare auto-immune disorder, at 79.

Baron Wolman

June 25, 1937 – November 2, 2020

One of the true pioneers of rock'n'roll photography has died peacefully at the age of 83 after a battle with a motor neurone condition. Baron Wolman (pictured) captured some of the most iconic images of the golden era of rock music while working for *Rolling Stone* magazine from 1967 until late 1970 as its first chief photographer..

He was born in Columbus, Ohio. After university he had a stint with the US Army military intelligence in West Berlin. While stationed in Germany he sold his first photo essay, about life behind the then-new Berlin Wall. From Germany he moved to California to continue his career as a photo-journalist.

Books of his work include *Baron Wolman – The Rolling Stone Years, Woodstock, Groupies, My Generation* and *Jimi Hendrix*.

When Wolman was presented with the VIP award at the 2011 Classic Rock Roll Of Honour, he demolished a camera on stage in homage to Pete Townshend. Afterwards he explained: "My first ever professional assignment was for *Rolling Stone* magazine, photographing The Who. When Townshend destroyed his guitar it used to terrify me, and it made me wonder: 'He's destroying the thing that makes music. What if I did the same thing to a camera?' For 45 years I had wanted to do the same thing. So I took an old camera out there with me and smashed it. It worked phenomenally."

Dave Munden

December 2, 1943 – October 15, 2020

The original drummer with The Tremeloes has died from a respiratory infection. Dave Munden was also an occasional lead singer for the band, whose hits in the 60s included *Do You Love Me, Here Comes My Baby* and *Silence Is Golden*. He was 76.

Jerry Jeff Walker

March 16, 1942 – October 23, 2020

The writer of the song *Mr Bojangles* has lost a battle with throat cancer. The song was covered by Bob Dylan, Dolly Parton, Nina Simone, Neil Diamond and more. New Yorker Jerry Jeff Walker was 68.

in 2006. "Once or twice I abandoned that record because I knew I was doing a lousy job. There was a lot of pressure, and although *Free Spirit* has some high points it was a compromise."

After moving to St Louis, Hensley spent almost three years with southern rockers Blackfoot. Although Hensley and the band appeared an unusual fit, Blackfoot leader Rickey Medlocke, now a member of Lynyrd Skynyrd, recalls it making good sense at the time.

"After the live record [*Highway Song Live*, 1982] our record company began pressurising us to change things up a bit," Medlocke tells *Classic Rock*. "In the very beginnings Blackfoot had had a B3 player, so we started looking around, and somehow we got Ken's number. When he said he was open to the idea of playing with us we were thrilled. I had seen Uriah Heep many times in their heyday."

Two albums with Hensley, *Siogo* and *Vertical Smiles*, divided the band's fan base, but Medlocke still believes that the Hensley-enhanced Blackfoot had to be seen on stage for full appreciation. "It bummed me out that we couldn't bring that line-up over to Europe," he sighs.

In the end, Hensley departed Blackfoot in mysterious circumstances. "He just upped and left. We had to scramble to find a replacement. But I don't think about that. I choose to remember the times that we made music together."

According to folklore, Hensley walked out on Blackfoot after learning of the death of David Byron in 1985. Later on he played keyboards for W.A.S.P., appearing on 1989's *The Headless Children*, and with Cinderella, contributing four songs to their 1990 album *Heartbreak Station*.

"There had been few musicians in my life I'd had revered as much," remembers W.A.S.P. leader Blackie Lawless. "Here was the man that wrote *Easy Livin'* and created 'that sound'. Many times when people meet their idols, it can be disappointing. To my surprise and relief, Ken could not have been cooler."

Having got clean in 1988, five years later Hensley found religion. "I don't think it would be possible for any normal person to be able to write so many songs without some kind of supernatural source of inspiration," he explained in 2008. "Songs come to me in the silliest of ways, so that's my belief."

"Christianity calmed Ken down," Mick Box believes. "When we first worked together he couldn't live without some sort of turmoil in his life. Discovering God and meeting Monica [Hensley's fourth wife] levelled him out somewhat."

TEARS IN MY EYES

THE STARS PAY TRIBUTE

"Uriah Heep toured with us in the 1970s. We were thrilled to have them share the stage with us – a classic British powerhouse with a slew of killer songs and soaring harmonies. Ken was a huge part of their success and a true rock star."

Paul Stanley, Kiss

"I was very sorry to hear the news about my friend Ken Hensley. He was a prince of a guy, a great musician and his contribution to the early years of Uriah Heep is immeasurable."

Eric Bloom, Blue Öyster Cult

"Ken was more than just a great songwriter. He had the meanest Hammond sound *ever*! He made that instrument roar like a beast! He wrote so many songs that feel like they've become part of my DNA."

Mikael Åkerfeldt, Opeth

"Ken was an incredible songwriter, guitarist and keyboard player, and more importantly a kind human being."

Glenn Hughes

"How sad to hear that one of my old heroes has left us. Ken Hensley was an amazing organ/keyboardist, guitar player, vocalist and songwriter, and Uriah Heep played a big role in my growing up with heavy music."

King Diamond

Hensley lived out his final years with Monica in Spain, in a small village near Alicante. Surrounded by livestock, he lived the rural life while working on a variety of musical projects, including one-man live shows. He received praise from his group Live Fire for a rock opera called *Blood On The Highway*, relating the rise and fall of a fictional rock star, that featured cameos from Glenn Hughes, Jørn Lande and former Heep frontman John Lawton.

Along the way there were occasional reunions with Heep. In 2001, having buried the hatchet with Lee Kerslake, Hensley and Lawton participated at an event called The Magician's Birthday Party at London's Shepherd's Bush Empire. Hensley later said: "It was bloody awful." However, five years ago Hensley and Kerslake (by that point Lee was no longer a band member) returned for a one-off date in Moscow with the current band.

Decades later, while living in Spain, Hensley was at peace with his legacy in and out of Uriah Heep.

"What irritated me most was the juxtaposition between our popularity with the public, which was considerable, and the complete lack of respect the music writers afforded us," he told me in 2006. "For [*Rolling Stone* journalist] Melissa Mills to have said she'd kill herself if we were successful… that's really stupid. Especially because I know that she's still alive.

"Fortunately that's not really the case any more," he added. "I've reached a point in my musical life at which even if people bother to critique what I do – which is rare – they hardly ever get so intense about it."

Hensley was cremated in a private ceremony. His death came less than two months after he himself broke the news of the loss of Lee Kerslake, describing his old adversary as "My friend of fifty-five years and the best drummer I ever played with."

"Everyone was at peace with one another at the end," Mick Box says, smiling.

A final Hensley album, *My Book Of Answers*, is due to be released in March 2021.

In what is believed to be his last ever interview, conducted days before his unexpected passing, Hensley told eonmusic's Eamon O'Neill: "I may have played my last show, because the virus has killed every show that I'd planned for this year, and we're unlikely to be able to play next year. That doesn't bother me, because I've had such a wonderful life – way beyond anything I ever dreamed of achieving. So I can sit back, say it was great, it was fantastic, and just get on with other things." **DL**

BARON WOLMAN: ROB MONK

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Wolfie Slams Van Halen Rumour

"This is a shitty lie," Eddie's son says about taking dad's place.

Wolfgang Van Halen has shot down rumours that he plans be the lead guitarist in a rebooted Van Halen, dismissing such speculation as "a shitty lie attempting to capitalise on these awful times".

It has been suggested that the 29-year-old, who from 2006 played bass with the band in place of Michael Anthony, would step up and be their guitarist, alongside a returning Anthony, Sammy Hagar and Alex Van Halen. It has even been claimed that Eddie Van Halen had given his blessing to the new line-up prior to his death. Wolfgang's response "please stop with this" was followed by: "Anyone peddling this shit is not only hurting the fans, but hurting me and my family."

Wolfgang's debut solo album, *Mammoth WVH*, is due in 2021. The first single from it, *Distance*, is available now.

Following Eddie's death on October 6, the band's catalogue sales soared by 7,800%, with streaming plays rising 660%.

The city of Pasadena, where Eddie and Alex grew up, is considering a permanent memorial to the late guitarist. **DL**

Eddie and son Wolfgang Van Halen.

Getting High On A New Thing

Rockers celebrate the end of Trump's US presidency.

Rock musicians across around the word have reacted with joy to Joe Biden becoming the United States President Elect; or, more pointedly, Donald Trump losing the election. Paul Stanley of Kiss celebrated the end of an administration "rooted in retribution, revenge and oppression", while Mick Jagger stated: "I'm so looking forward to coming back to an America free of harsh words and name-calling and being among people who I know have common ground and harmony. It's a challenge but it can be done." Former Dream Theater drummer Mike Portnoy voiced hope for a future full of "unity, dignity, grace, class, respect, empathy, hope, science, truth, decency and compassion." adding: "For the first time in a long time I am proud to be an American."

Others applauding the change include Mötley Crüe drummer Tommy Lee, Bon Jovi, Pearl Jam, Lenny Kravitz, Halestorm's Lzzy Hale and Queen singer Adam Lambert.

Musicians likely to be less than pleased by the election result include Ace Frehley and System Of A Down's John Dolmayan. **FL**

NEWS

Jimmy Page says the pandemic has been a personal revitalising force. "It made me think: 'Right, now's the time to start thinking about coming back at some point and being able to perform'," he tells *GQ* magazine, adding: "Without gigs, music means nothing."

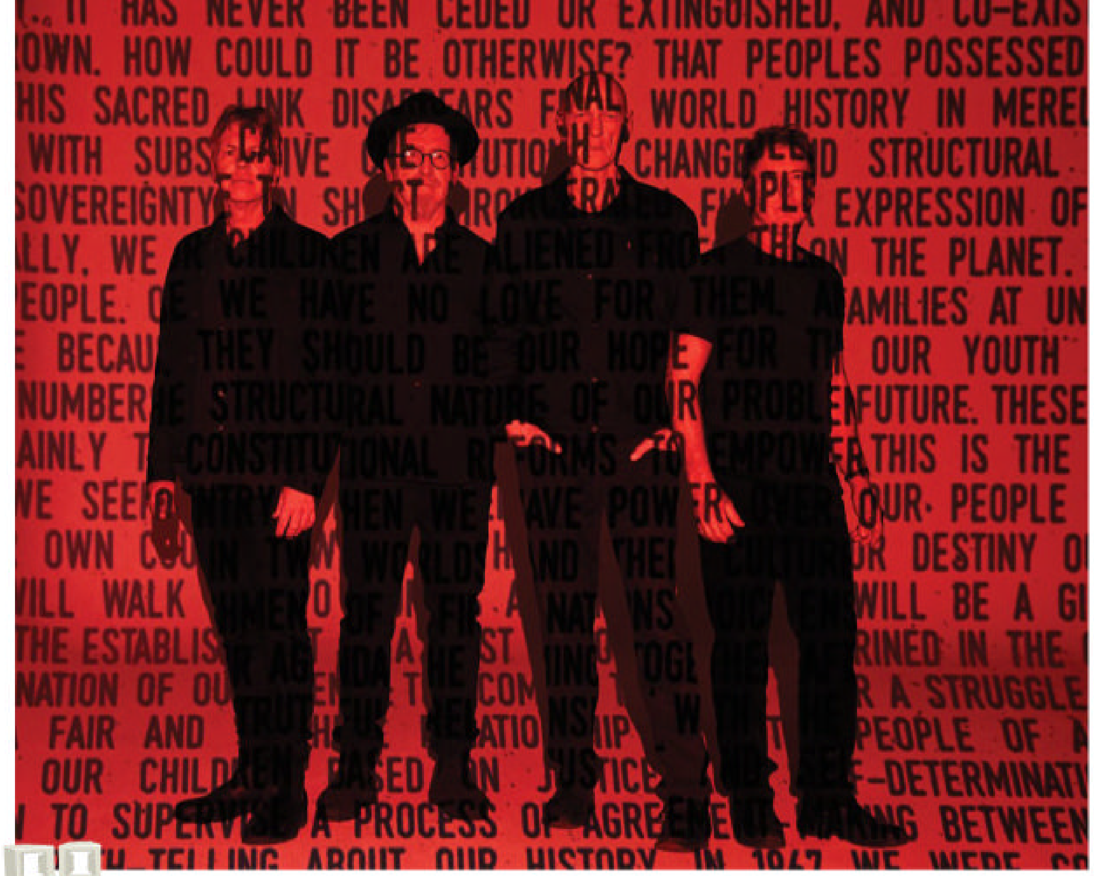
Thunder have set March 12, 2021 for the release of their new studio album, *All The Right Noises*. Its first single, *Last One Out Turn Off The Lights*, was written by guitarist Luke Morley in reference to Brexit.

Blackmore's Night have released a new four-track Christmas EP, *Here We Come A-Caroling*, via Ear Music. It's available on limited-edition 10-inch translucent green vinyl, as well as CD digipak and digital.

Rammstein's **Till Lindemann** and Hypocrisy's **Peter Tägtgren** are ending their Lindemann partnership after two albums. Their final joint release, a DVD of a 2020 show in Moscow, is due in the spring.

Alice Cooper (pictured) issues a new studio album, *Detroit Stories*, on February 26. Guest appearances include Joe Bonamassa, Wayne Kramer of MC5, and the original Alice Cooper band's Michael Bruce, Dennis Dunaway and Neal Smith.

Sweet's new album *Isolation Boulevard* is released in digital form on December 18, with vinyl and CD formats to follow. It's preceded by a single, *Still Got The Rock*, on December 8.



WELCOME BACK

Midnight Oil

Veteran politically driven Aussie rockers return with a new album and promise there's more to come.

If you've seen Midnight Oil frontman Peter Garrett perform, his six-foot-four frame, bald head and eye-catchingly unorthodox dance style will have made you remember him. The band were in their prime when their 1987 album *Diesel And Dust* and hit single *Beds Are Burning* drew the world's attention to its primary theme: the neglect and oppression of Aboriginal people in their native Australia. Now, 18 years after they split, with Garrett having pursued a political career as an Australian cabinet minister in the meantime, they're back with a new album, *The Makaratta Project*, which focuses on similar issues. The difference is that this time many of the singers and players are guests, drawn from the Indigenous and First Nations communities whose struggles their songs seek to address.

Midnight Oil re-formed to tour in 2017. What made you decide to make a new record?

It's really basic. We got together, and you can either find the fire and the blood and the storm and the uplift… or you can be a nostalgia act. So let's just see whether we still are what we are. We found that the audience was there, and in some cases had even grown. So the question becomes: can we make some new music together? And we thought why not, let's just see what we can do.

The 2017 Uluru Statement Of The Heart (demanding a change to the Australian constitution, to empower First Nations Australians and recognise their history) is read out in full on the new album. Was it part of the inspiration to make new music?

No, it's just always been an abiding theme for us. Through touring in the early eighties we were lucky enough to make friends with First Nations and Aboriginal people and musicians. So the fact we had songs around those themes was really a continuation of those relationships.

In the past one criticism of the band was that you were white men telling indigenous peoples' stories. Was it important that they actually played and sang on your new record?

Yeah, I think we had to share the singing experience and have Aboriginal performers connect with the songs themselves and make them into something special, which is exactly what happened. It's the first time I've ever heard other people singing Midnight Oil songs, and it's amazing!

> "You can either find the fire, or you can be a nostalgia act."

In many ways, upbeat rockers like *Gadigal Land* sound like you're channelling the old sound you had when you started out.

Well, it's either going to fuse your synapses and make your legs turn to jelly or it isn't. If it doesn't work at that physical level it's not going to work otherwise. You're right, that's a classic Oils rocker –put some brass on, get the chants going, get the Acca Dacca guitars out, see you at the end!

Is there more Oil music to come?

Yeah. We actually recorded about twenty songs – some of those have gone on to Makaratta with other performers, and we've got a bunch of stuff of our own. We're just sorting mixes at the moment, most of it's done. It'll probably emerge at some point, when covid retreats a little bit. But there's definitely more to come. **JS**

The Makaratta Project is out now via Sony Music Entertainment.

WOLFGANG VAN HALEN: GETTY; MIDNIGHT OIL: DANIEL BOUD/PRESS

"In this band it's really about the live performance. That's how we deliver the message."

HIGH HOPES

Ego Kill Talent

These Brazilian alt.rockers are defying their nightmare year, with big riffs and much tequila.

If you think the pandemic has scuppered your plans, spare a thought for Ego Kill Talent. "We were supposed to be on a stadium tour of South America with Metallica," guitarist/bassist Theo Van Der Loo sighs, "then supporting System Of A Down in Europe. We also had dates with the Foo Fighters, and Faith No More in the UK. The album was meant to be out in May, our first international release with a big label behind us. We couldn't do any of it. It's so frustrating."

Many a lesser band would have thrown their tour diary on the fire. But the Brazilian five-piece rallied, and split that postponed second album, *The Dance Between Extremes*, into three 90s-influenced alt.rock EPs that land like rabbit punches.

Led by vocalist Jonathan Dörr, with the other band members swapping instruments as the mood takes them, anthemic crunchers like *Deliverance* could have fallen out of Dave Grohl's back pocket – their sound presumably a factor in the fan poll that saw them open for the Foos and Queens Of The Stone Age across Brazil two years ago.

"Dave hugs you for real," Van Der Loo says of Grohl. "And Josh [Homme] can drink tequila like it's a bottle of beer. The thing I learnt from him is that Californian tequila is way better than what we have in Brazil."

None of those breaks seemed feasible in 2014, when former Sepultura drummer Jean Dolabella started jamming with a cautious Van Der Loo, who had laid down his guitar some years earlier after too many dead ends. But with Dörr, Raphael Miranda and Niper Boaventura in the line-up, something clicked. The following year their debut single *Sublimated* went viral. More recently the rock press has bestowed perfect 10s on the band's sets at Download Paris and Brixton Academy. "That was insane," Dörr says of the latter, "because it's the same iconic stage that Faith No More played [captured on 1990's *You Fat Bastards* live release]. We listened to that album so many times."

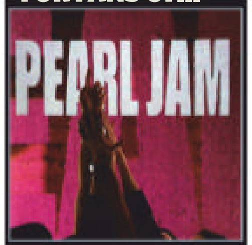
In the studio, meanwhile, there's a maturity to Ego Kill Talent's new EP material, with *Sin And Saints'* dichotomy-exploring heavy roll described as "a mix between Soulfly and Lenny Kravitz", while *Silence* and *Deliverance* deconstructs life regrets and stalled relationships. "You can either hold grievances or go with the flow," says Van Der Loo. "But don't be a victim in your own life."

True to that philosophy, the band won't be spending this annus horribilis licking their wounds. Instead they're preparing for the day when they can play these songs to live audiences. "In this band it's really about the live performance," says Van Der Loo. "That's how we deliver the message."

Dörr is more succinct: "Despite the fact we talk about deep things in our lyrics, we love to rock the shit out." **HY**

The Dance Between EP is released on December 4 via BMG.

FOR FANS OF...



"Our sound is influenced by a lot of nineties music like Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Metallica and Faith No More," says Dörr.

Van Der Loo: "But if I was going to name specific albums, I would say Pearl Jam's *Ten*. It's everything, man – the songs, the melodies, the lyrics. You listen to it today and it's out of time."

MY FIRST LOVE

Boléro

MAURICE RAVEL

By Steve Hackett

The Genesis guitarist-turned-solo artist on the French composer's classic.

Ravel's Boléro by the London Philharmonic Orchestra was the first album that I ever bought on vinyl – the year would have been 1962 – and back then I used to go completely nuts to it. I was twelve years old at the time, and I used to pretend that I was Hugo Rignold, the real conductor of the piece, leaping about the room and doing handstands. It energised me so much.

I've seen *Boléro* performed live by an orchestra, which was a great experience, and one of these days I'm going to have to record a version of my own.

Even now I can still remember hearing *Boléro* for the very first time. It was part of a TV play, and I saw it on a black-and-white set. The lights were turned out and it was used for a murder, so I always felt it had a dance of death undercurrent.

I love the slow crescendo of the piece, its mix of major and minor sections. The happy melody and the sad melody get twinned endlessly throughout, and I think that rubbed off on a lot of artists from the world of progressive rock. You can hear it in Zeppelin and of course Genesis. It has certainly seeped into my own music. I have used a lot of *Boléro* rhythms.

I find that people who say they don't like classical music will often appreciate *Boléro,* which goes to show why it is so special. **DL**

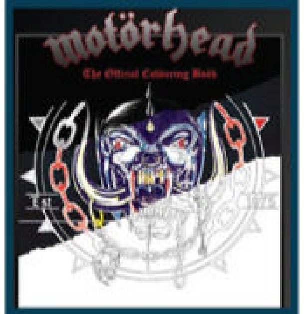
NEWS

The Official Keith Emerson Tribute Concert is to be released on Blu-ray by Cherry Red Records on March 11, 2021, the fifth anniversary of the passing of the keyboard great. Spread across three discs, the two-and-a-half-hour film was shot in Los Angeles in 2016 and features a line-up of musical luminaries, including Eddie Jobson, Jordan Rudess, Steve Lukather and Steve Porcaro, performing music by Emerson, Lake & Palmer, The Nice, Emerson, Lake & Powell, The Keith Emerson Band and the Three Fates Project.

Metallica have released a limited edition box set of their Batch 100 whiskey, including two 12" vinyl picture discs of the playlist used in the finishing process, a *Blackened* zine and memorabilia. More info at: spiritedgifts.com

Black Spiders, who split up following a farewell tour in May 2017, have regrouped for a single, *Fly In The Soup*, with a third album to follow.

British hard rockers **Inglorious** release their fourth album, *We Will Ride*, on February 5 via Frontiers Records. It's the first to feature newcomers guitarists Danny Dela Cruz and Dan Stevens and bassist Vinnie Colla.



Thinking of things to do if, God forbid, there's another lockdown? **Rock N' Roll Colouring** produce colouring books dedicated to rock's most iconic and visual bands. Their first editions, on Judas Priest and Motörhead (pictured), are available now at £11.99 each.

WELCOME BACK

Albert Bouchard

Decades on, the Blue Öyster Cult man releases the solo album that BÖC's album *Imaginos* was intended to be.

DURING BLUE ÖYSTER Cult's heyday back in the 1970s, drummer/vocalist Albert Bouchard was one of the band's principal songwriters. Since being fired in 1981 he's had a peripatetic career. Now, Bouchard has released a solo album titled *Re Imaginos*, his interpretation of BÖC's 1988 album *Imaginos* – an album that was originally intended to be a Bouchard solo project, until the band got hold of it. *Re Imaginos* is a sophisticated, powerful yet convoluted tale of alien conspiracy, and it's taken Bouchard decades to bring it to fruition.

How close is *Re Imaginos* to how you originally envisaged *Imaginos*?
It should be pointed out that this is more about the vision of Sandy Pearlman, BÖC's producer and manager [who died in 2016]. It was his concept in the first place, based on his writings and poetry, so I wanted to stay true to those ideas. I believe I have.

"Hardly anyone from the band is actually on [BÖC's *Imaginos*]."

Do you feel that Blue Öyster Cult undermined the vision when they recorded *Imaginos*?
When I was fired by the band in 1981, Sandy said he'd get me a solo deal, and we began work on what was supposed to be my debut solo album, namely *Imaginos*. There were a lot of delays over the next several years. Then Columbia, BÖC's label with whom I was working on this solo album, suggested *Imaginos* should be released under Blue Öyster Cult's name and not mine. I thought that meant I'd be back in the band, which I was happy about. I was wrong. Did they undermine what I wanted to do? It was confusing, because hardly anyone from the band is actually on that album.

It seems like this album has been hanging over you for decades. Is it a relief to have finally it done?
Sandy first talked about his idea for this in 1967, so it's been a while! People kept asking me over the years when I was gonna do my version of these songs. At least that won't happen any more.

This is a rock opera. Do you have any plans to perform it on stage?
Definitely. The original plan was for three double albums based around the *Imaginos* mythos. I want to do that, and also to finally play these songs live.

You're on the new BÖC album *The Symbol Remains*. What is your current status with the band?
I've guested live with the band every year since 2012. And I love doing it. The problems we had in the past have all been worked out. I guess I'm back in the family.

What happened in 1981 when BÖC sacked you?
Donald [Roeser, guitarist] had real issues with what was happening at the time in my personal life. We fell out very badly. He claimed my personal behaviour was affecting live performances. And he could be right. So he persuaded the rest of the guys to fire me. Thankfully, in 1995, Donald and I worked it all out.

Your use of a cowbell on *(Don't Fear) The Reaper* was famously parodied in 2000 on the TV show *Saturday Night Live*. How did you feel about that?
I thought it was brilliant. But how did they hear the cowbell in the mix?! It's not very audible. *(Don't Fear) The Reaper* is not an obvious cowbell song. **MD**

Re Imaginos is available now via Rockheart Records/Deko Entertainment.

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Jimi Hendrix

Dolly Dagger

How London's famous clock tower and Jimi's main groupie inspired his last great song.

Words: **Bill DeMain**

Early one morning in August 1969, bassist Billy Cox was sitting on the patio of the house in upstate New York that he was sharing with Jimi Hendrix and drummer Mitch Mitchell. Looking out at the cows grazing in the nearby pasture, Cox thumbed a four-note pattern over and over through his amp.

"I'd put some new strings on, and I'm playing 'doodoo-dum-dum' – the chime of Big Ben," Cox tells *Classic Rock*. "Jimi's room was right above, and the window flew open. He said: 'Hold it! Keep playing that, don't stop!' He comes down in his undershorts and grabs his guitar, then he completes the riff. That was the formation of *Dolly Dagger*."

Hendrix, Cox, Mitchell and assorted friends were at the Shokan House to prepare for playing at the Woodstock Festival. "But really, Jimi rented that place to get his head together, and bringing Billy in was essential to the whole musical vibe," engineer Eddie Kramer tells us. "The change of musical direction was immediate, because of the roots they shared – the R&B, the funk. They grew up on those sounds, playing the chitlin circuit."

"We were hooked at the hip musically," Cox says with a laugh. "We'd been in the 101st Airborne together. Twenty minutes after we first met we were jamming. One reason that Jimi called me after all those years is that my mind was an archive of the riffs that we'd created in the past."

"They were writing a lot," says Kramer. "I remember dragging a four-track tape machine up there, and *Dolly Dagger* was one of the demos we worked on. Then we cut a version of it at the Record Plant, which was meh. We finally nailed it at Electric Lady. It's all part of the experience, no pun intended, of how Jimi would work through a song to get it right. And *Dolly Dagger* is a complex song."

With hindsight the song's complexity is fitting for the woman who inspired the lyrics. Devon Wilson was born in Milwaukee in 1943 and ran away from home as a teenager. "She was a mixed-race kid, on the streets all her life," Cox explains. Devon drifted to New York City, where she became part of the nightclub scene. That's where she met Hendrix.

"They had a really close relationship," says Kramer. "Devon was a presence. Very beautiful, very commanding, with quite an edge to her. But she was funny."

Devon kept Jimi happy by scoring drugs for him and procuring girls for threesomes. But as they grew closer, she expected to be his number one.

"Devon used to hang out on the sessions, and try not to say too much," says Kramer. "But she was used to a lot of attention. When Jimi was in the middle of recording, sometimes it would be very difficult to give her attention."

It was this dynamic that led to the episode at the centre of the song's lyric. On November 27, 1969, Jimi's twenty-seventh birthday, he and Devon went to see the Rolling Stones at Madison Square Garden. Since it was his birthday, Jimi half-expected to sit in with his friends. But Mick Jagger was wary of being upstaged, so it didn't happen. Afterwards Devon hosted a party for the Stones at a luxurious apartment she'd borrowed. All night she flirted shamelessly with Jagger in front of Hendrix. Mick's rivalry with Jimi extended beyond the stage. A few years earlier, Jimi had tried to pull Jagger's girlfriend Marianne Faithfull. At some point, Jagger nicked his finger. Rather than get a bandage, Devon licked off the blood. "That's where the line '*She drinks the blood from a jagged edge*' came from," says Kramer.

"The new direction suggested by *Dolly Dagger* added another question mark to Jimi's story."

After the song's basic rhythm track was cut at Electric Lady studios, Jimi layered on more guitars, backing vocals and foot stomps. *Dolly Dagger* was intended for the follow-up to *Band Of Gypsys*, but ended up being hijacked for a film soundtrack put together by Hendrix's manager Mike Jeffery. As explored in the new documentary *Music, Money And Madness: Hendrix In Maui*, the film, *Rainbow Bridge*, was a mishmash of underhanded deals and unscripted silliness. Its only redeeming features were the scenery and Jimi's killer performance.

"It was on the side of a dormant volcano called Haleakala, which means 'house of the sun'," Cox says. "I remember as we walked to the stage, Jimi looked at me and said: 'Man, this is strange. Do you feel that vibration?' It had a lot of energy. But when we went on, it was magic. Jimi was in charge. I think I could've played with one hand because it was so spiritual."

Dolly Dagger was first released on October 9, 1971 on the posthumously released *Rainbow Bridge* album, then as a single on October 23.

Jimi didn't live to see the release of the film or the soundtrack (he died on September 18, 1970). The funkier new direction suggested by *Dolly Dagger* added another question mark to his story. "If he'd lived, I think he'd have his own empire," Kramer says. "He would've straightened his life out, found great new musical directions. His place in history would be even greater than it is now."

"Jimi was a cosmic messenger who saw music as a means to bring people together," Cox says. "He was global before the rest of the world was global. His music is as relevant in the twenty-first century as it was in the twentieth. And it'll probably be relevant in the twenty-second and twenty-third centuries."

As for Dolly Dagger herself, Devon Wilson met an untimely end when she fell from an eighth-storey window of the Chelsea Hotel in 1971.

What did she think of the song that made her part of history? "In a perverse sort of way, she probably dug it," says Kramer. "It's not so much that it stroked her ego, as it revealed something about her. Even though it had some negative aspects, hey, imagine being in 1970 and having Jimi Hendrix write a song about you!"

Music, Money And Madness: Hendrix In Maui and the accompanying album Live In Maui are out now via Experience Hendrix LLC in partnership with Legacy Recordings.

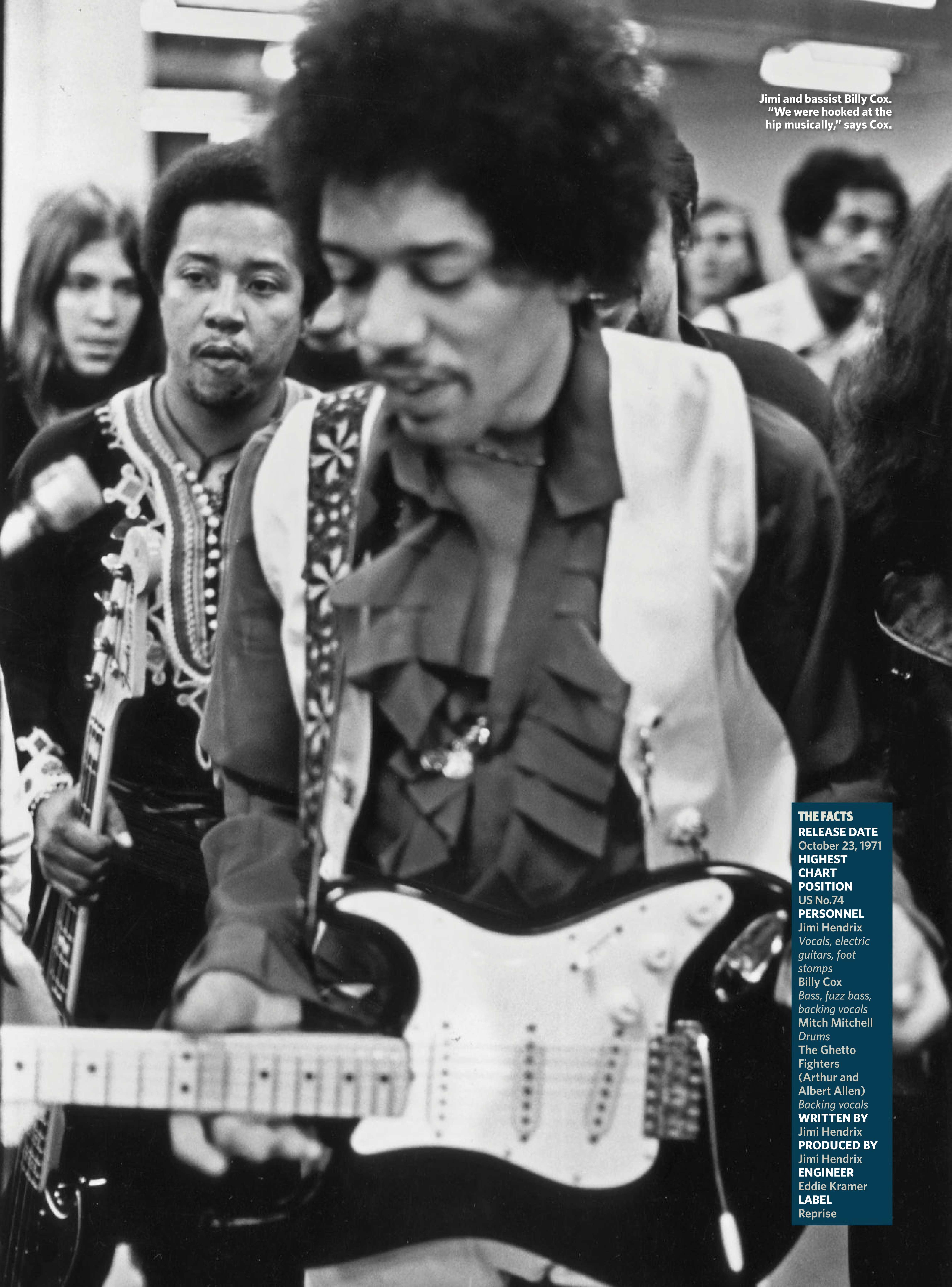
WALKING THE TIGHTROPE

Even when things are going well in the studio, making a great record can be a tightrope walk across artistic temperaments. As a bandleader, how did Jimi Hendrix maintain that balance?

"Jimi would take the piss out himself with self-deprecating humour," says Eddie Kramer. "If all of a sudden a track was going south, without even missing a beat he would launch into the *Batman* theme or *Peter Gunn* or any of the TV themes that were popular then. Everybody would laugh and relax, then we'd get right back into the song again."

DANIEL TEHENEY AUTHENTIC HENDRIX LLC

FRED W MCDARRAH/GETTY IMAGES



Jimi and bassist Billy Cox. "We were hooked at the hip musically," says Cox.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
October 23, 1971

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
US No.74

PERSONNEL
Jimi Hendrix
Vocals, electric guitars, foot stomps
Billy Cox
Bass, fuzz bass, backing vocals
Mitch Mitchell
Drums
The Ghetto Fighters (Arthur and Albert Allen)
Backing vocals

WRITTEN BY
Jimi Hendrix

PRODUCED BY
Jimi Hendrix

ENGINEER
Eddie Kramer

LABEL
Reprise

Q&A

Phil Campbell

The former Motörhead man on his family band, the tyranny of politicians, and what Lemmy would have made of the pandemic.

Words: **Henry Yates**

It takes more than a global meltdown to slow Phil Campbell's momentum. After all, this is the same guitarist who survived the potentially career-ending demise of Motörhead in 2015, coming back just months later as Phil Campbell And The Bastard Sons, flanked by his three offspring and with Neil Starr on vocals. And this spring, with most rockers making a dash for their LA survival bunkers, Campbell barely missed a beat, locking down at his home near Pontypridd in Wales to record his band's second album, *We're The Bastards*, as the world burned around him.

How pleased are you with *We're The Bastards*?
I'm over the moon. We hoped we could repeat that first album [2018's *The Age Of Absurdity*], but it's beyond all my expectations. Play it loud and it'll knock your head off, this one. Todd's production is slamming, really in-your-face. It's been one hell of a year, so perhaps we can bring a bit of cheer. I hope this album will make people forget that all hell is breaking loose.

Is there still Motörhead DNA in the new material?
Oh yeah. I can't just change my soul overnight. It gives a nod to Motörhead, but it's a different dynamic. It's a hard rock, classic rock album, with bits of metal in there. We've established our sound with this one. Because of all the generations in the band, we're taking in all those different influences. Y'know, Neil, our singer, wouldn't be able to tell you the name of a Sabbath album or the singer with Deep Purple. He wouldn't have a clue. He comes from an entirely different musical viewpoint. They keep me on my toes.

It's a good album title.
One of the boys came up with that. I wasn't too sure myself initially. I'd come up with some flowery hippie ideas, and the boys told me: "They're too poncy, dad." But I think it's great now.

Don't your sons mind being called bastards?
Well I don't actually call them bastards, I call them by their first names. Neil came up with that band name. My wife wasn't pleased at all. She's still not over the moon about it. But we played Wacken early on, we dropped the banner, and from that day we became Phil Campbell And The Bastard Sons. It seems to have taken off. They're even saying the name on certain radio stations now – after the watershed. We know we're not going to sell as many records as Take That. We know our limitations.

How did you record an album during a pandemic?
Well we'd thrashed out song ideas in January and February, then the shit hit the fan in March, didn't it? Luckily we've got our own studio and it worked out great. We all went down separately. At most it was three of us there, socially distanced, and the studio would be scrubbed after every session.

How strict are you with your sons on the road?
Well, as long as they're not drunk before the show. Some of them may have a bottle of beer half an hour before they go on, which is totally acceptable. Y'know, with Motörhead, me and Lem, there was more than a bottle drunk. Different band, different days.

How difficult has lockdown been for you personally?
Not too bad, because I'm pretty lazy anyway. Time was always pretty precious with Motörhead, for thirty-odd years. Now I just walk the dog, read, catch up with TV. If I'd known it'd go on for a year or whatever I would have started learning the banjo or something. But it's been a horrific year for so many people. Normally, if there's something wrong in your life, as a parent or husband, you've got some degree of control to fix the situation. But with this you're helpless.

How about those who've argued against masks?
I think they're being totally ridiculous. With one cough, they say, five thousand droplets come out. I saw a video once of a guy talking in a pub, and they showed what was coming out every time he opened his mouth. So it's just ridiculous. It's discourteous. It's dangerous. Why not put a mask on?

There's been a few Motörhead reissues this year. Do you keep up with everything?
I know what's coming out and I put my input in. I've got the new *Ace Of Spades* box set, and it's huge. Maybe it'll turn a whole new generation on to Motörhead. Imagine hearing *Ace Of Spades* for the first time, y'know?

What would Lemmy have made of the pandemic?
I don't think he would have wanted to tour. He might have just said fuck it, gone out and played. But when he saw people dropping, I think he'd have realised the danger. He was quite lazy as well. Lem liked to just stay home when he could. Go to the Rainbow [bar in LA, his regular haunt] and that'd be it. That'd be his day.

He probably wouldn't have been impressed by our politicians' response to it.
No, not at all. I don't think anyone is. It's just farcical. An absolute joke. It's one bumble or cock-up after the other. They're just lining their own pockets, keeping themselves in jobs – the usual stuff.

Lemmy died around Christmas. Do you think of him more at this time of year?
Nah, I think of him most days. Just being on the stage or the tour bus, coming down to use the toilet at five in the morning and Lem's still awake. He's always around, at the back of my head somewhere.

How do you feel about turning sixty next May?
It's just a number. I don't feel sixty. Apart from every now and again, when you have trouble getting up from the sofa.

What do you want for Christmas?
A vaccine would be nice. That'll do me.

We're The Bastards is out now via Nuclear Blast.

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

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the biggest Internet portal, providing you various content: brand new books, trending movies, fresh magazines, hot games, recent software, latest music releases.

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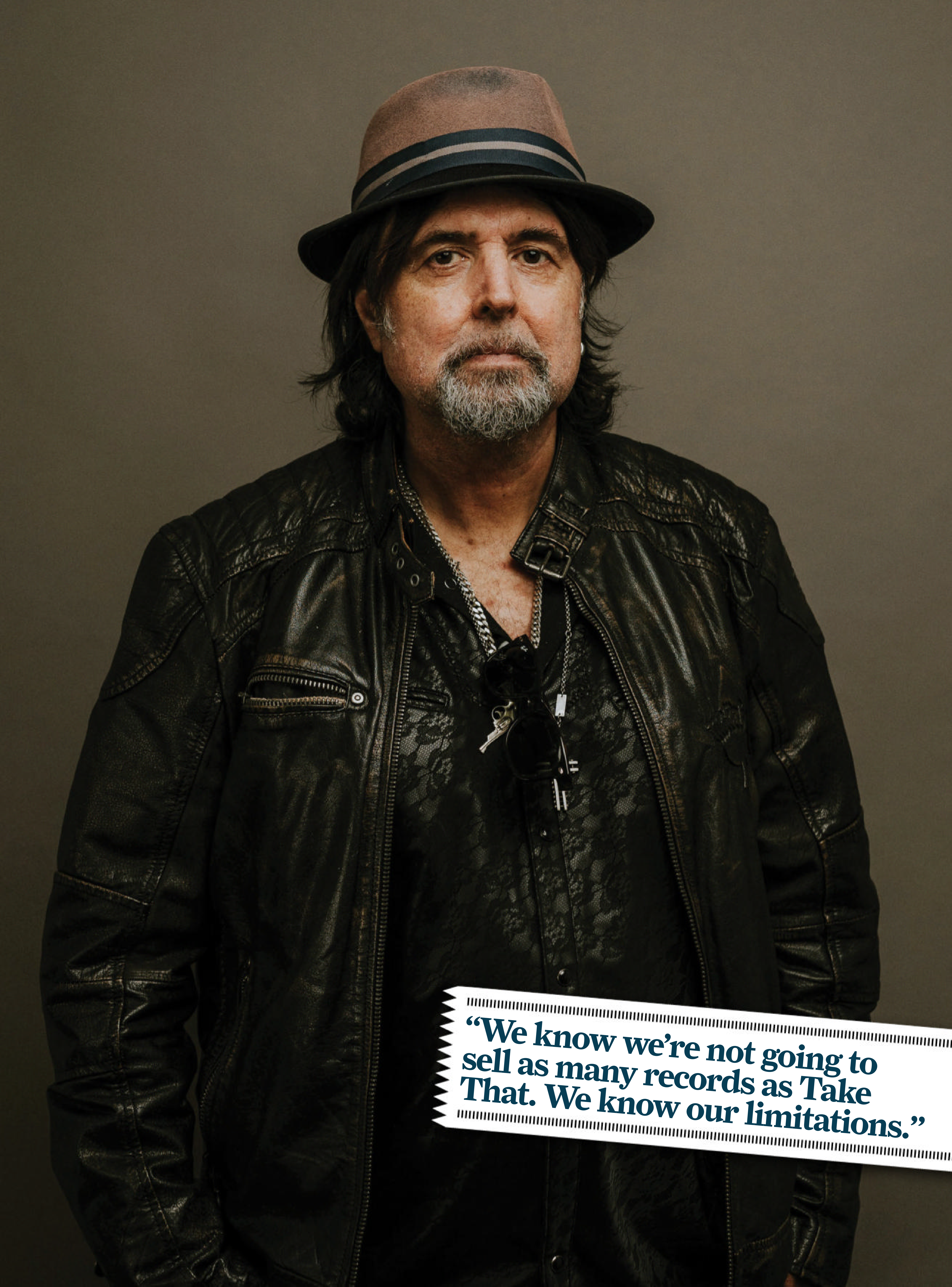

"We know we're not going to sell as many records as Take That. We know our limitations."

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THE PINEAPPLE THIEF
Versions of the Truth

The Pineapple Thief return with their new studio album Versions Of The Truth

"Masterfully executed mesh of sounds, moods and mediations."

PROG

THE PINEAPPLE THIEF
The Soord Sessions vol. 4

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4TH DECEMBER on GREEN LP

TANGERINE DREAM
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"It seems the legacy is in safe hands."

PROG

OZRIC TENTACLES
Space for the Earth

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PROG

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THE PRETTY THINGS
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CLASSIC ROCK

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29TH JANUARY 2021

CLASSIC ROCK PRESENTS

THE BEST OF 2020

THE YEAR IN ROCK

ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

It's been a very odd 12 months, but 2020 delivered plenty of new albums to get excited about, from both big names and newcomers. Here, then, is the *Classic Rock* critics' choice of the best 50.

Words: **Rich Davenport, Paul Elliott, Dave Everley, Ian Fortnam, Polly Glass, Rob Hughes, Neil Jeffries, Emma Johnston, Siân Llewellyn, Dave Ling, Grant Moon, David Sinclair, Henry Yates**

50 BRITISH LION
The Burning PARLOPHONE

Eight years after the promising self-titled debut, Iron Maiden bassist Steve Harris returned with his 'other band'. *The Burning* suggests that touring has allowed British Lion to grow into exactly that – an actual band. Our review said it was "vastly more punchy and powerful than its predecessor", adding that British Lion had "evolved into a fiery and characterful ensemble with a strong identity of their own". **DL**

Killer track: *City Of Fallen Angels*

49 GREEN DAY
Father Of All Motherfuckers REPRISE

The sleeve revisits the hand-and-grenade of 2004's *American Idiot*. And while Billie Joe Armstrong and co. haven't displaced that career high with *Father Of All Motherfuckers*, there's enough quality on it to take the edge off the 2020 shit-show. Don't come looking for envelope-pushing, high-concept punk opera; do come for pogo-ready smashers like *Oh Yeah!* and *Sugar Youth*, played with an energy that puts most middle-aged punks to shame. **HY**

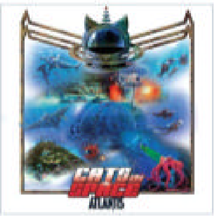
Killer track: *Sugar Youth*

48 THE LEMON TWIGS
Songs For The General Public 4AD

There's high camp afoot in The Lemon Twigs' 70s-style power pop, which is perhaps inevitable given that Brian and Michael D'Addario, brothers from New York, have a background in musical theatre. On *Songs For The General Public*, their third album, *The One* is a bubblegum anthem akin to a lovesick Wombles, but there's some weightier stuff too, including punk-rock swagger in *Leather Together* and dark beauty in the emotional finale *Ashamed*. **PE**

Killer track: *Ashamed*

47 CATS IN SPACE
Atlantis HARMONY FACTORY



A change of lead vocalist is always a potential risk for any band, and the fourth album from Cats In Space introduces their third frontman. Fortunately Damian Edwards is a startlingly gifted addition who besides ticking each of the band's original boxes also opens up all manner of exciting new possibilities. *Atlantis* presents the Cats in full Technicolor, sounding even more bombastic, melodic and 70s-tastic than ever before. **DL**

Killer track: *Revolution*

Jon Bon Jovi

46 BROTHERS OSBORNE
Skeletons SNAKEFARM

Following 2018's more sedate *Port Saint Joe*, the Nashville-based Osborne brothers decided to beef things up for album number three, *Skeletons*, and chucked a whole load of funky guitars, toe-tapping tunes and countrified good vibes into the pot while they were at it. The result is the sort of record you want to hear played live, in its entirety, with a drink in hand and your favourite people at your side. **PG**

Killer track: *All The Good Ones Are*

45 BON JOVI
2020 VIRGIN EMI

Similar to the way in which post-9-11 Bruce Springsteen approached *The Rising*, *2020* sees Jon Bon Jovi, post-Trump, mixing his day job as a stadium rocker with man-of-the people spokesman for America's disadvantaged. At its best, *2020* movingly and effectively addresses school shootings and gun laws, military vets suffering with PTSD, the covid pandemic itself and the impact of George Floyd's murder. An unexpectedly powerful record. **NJ**

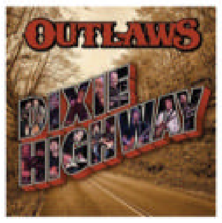
Killer track: *American Reckoning*

CLAY PATRICK MCBRIDE/PRESS

Low Cut Connie

CHRIS WOOD/PRESS

44 THE OUTLAWS
Dixie Highway SPV



Eight years after their previous studio album, Henry Paul's Outlaws released one of the finest southern rock albums of 2020. A work of quiet, determined dignity, *Dixie Highway* sits firmly on the same page as the group's career-defining records from the 1970s. "I hope that it reinforces the notion that The Outlaws still matter, and that southern rock will always matter," Paul told *Classic Rock*. Mission accomplished. **DL**

Killer track: *Southern Rock Will Never Die*

43 BLUES PILLS
Holy Moly! NUCLEAR BLAST

Recorded in an analogue studio in the wilds of their native Sweden, these retro rockers' third album is another gleeful denial that the past 40 years in music ever happened. It's also the sound of a band bouncing back from burnout and existential turmoil, and bringing with them their most intense, mature and impassioned work to date. Channelling her pain, singer Elin Larsson discovers new levels of soul here. **GM**

Killer track: *Kiss My Past Goodbye*

42 COREY TAYLOR
CMFT ROADRUNNER

Freed from the cage of fury and angst that is Slipknot, their frontman Corey Taylor pushes the 'fun' agenda hard on his debut solo album. Outlaw country rock'n'roll (*HWY 666*), gold-plated arena anthems (*Black Eyes Blue*), even 80s-style pop-metal (*Samantha's Gone*, a ringer for Poison)… *CMFT* is stylistically promiscuous, superhumanly cocky and a total blast. And amid the ongoing dumpster fire that is 2020, that's exactly what we needed. **DE**

Killer track: *Black Eyes Blue*

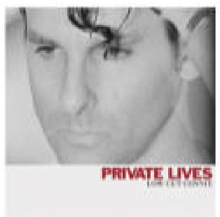
41 SONGHOY BLUES
Optisme TRANSGRESSIVE

The Malian rockers' third album is gnarlier than their previous ones but no less optimistic for it. Right from the gut-grabbing classic-rock riffage of opener *Badala* – taking in their rare English-language track *Worry* – *Optisme* fizzes with hard-nosed joie de vivre. Across 11 tracks the band flit with honeyed fluidity between atmospheric desert blues, staccato rhythms and hypnotic funkiness.

The most life-affirming protest music you're likely to hear all year. **PG**

Killer track: *Badala*

40 LOW CUT CONNIE
Private Lives
CONTENDER/MIDCITIZEN



Adam Weiner was spot-on when in he described this record to *Classic Rock* as "a beautiful mess". It *is* messy, but all the more warm and characterful for it. A big, sprawling double album that took two years, 30-odd guests and a ton of spaces across the USA to complete, it's the soulful, sweet yet sugar-free accumulation of all Weiner's years spent lugging pianos around, meeting society's misfits and ingesting rock'n'roll with a religious fervour. **PG**

Killer track: *Private Lives*

OUT OF AFRICA

Optisme came into 2020 like a clear-eyed breath of fresh air. But who are the Malian rockers behind it?

Words: **Polly Glass**

Formed in Bamako, Mali in 2012, in the aftermath of civil conflict, Songhoy Blues know the essential powers of music more deeply than most. Having been exiled from the north of the country by a regime that, among other things, banned music, they started the band with a view to "recreate that lost ambience of the north and make all the refugees relive those northern songs".

"Our audience in the beginning was mainly made up of refugees from the north," band member Aliou Touré told *The Blues* magazine in 2015. "All the different ethnic groups were there – Songhoy, Tuareg – and they were all drawn there as a nostalgia thing. We played music from the north, and it was a place to go and meet other people. It was our community, a home from home."

From playing Ali Farka Touré covers at a family wedding, to being 'discovered' by Damon Albarn's Africa Express in 2013 (leading to performances on shows including Jools Holland's *Later*), their rise over the past decade has shaken perceptions of contemporary African music in a brilliant way. To consign them to the 'world music' portion of your catalogue, however, wouldn't be wholly appropriate, not least because of the niche appeal that risks implying. Songhoy Blues, especially with *Optisme*, make records that rock. And while the rhythms of their motherland are embedded in their sound, it's at least as easy to pick out signs of the classic rock, punk and blues they grew up listening to (including The Clash, Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, BB King and John Lee Hooker), along with energetic strains of hip-hop. All of which amounts to music that invigorates the soul rather than agitate it. As we said earlier this year: "Theirs are protest songs that, far from calling on the listener to take up arms, demand that you dance."

On *Optisme*, with rare English language track *Worry*, that was something they deliberately built on.

"When you go out to clubs in Soho, London or New York, you hear hard rock music that can make people move," Aliou said. "We wanted to make a rock club crowd get involved with Songhoy Blues. It's about Songhoy Blues reaching even further than before. We want to see people jumping on a Songhoy Blues track like they were at a concert."

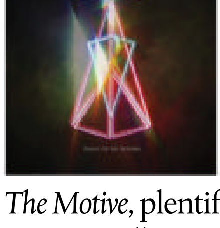
Here's hoping it happens in 2021.

Black Stone Cherry

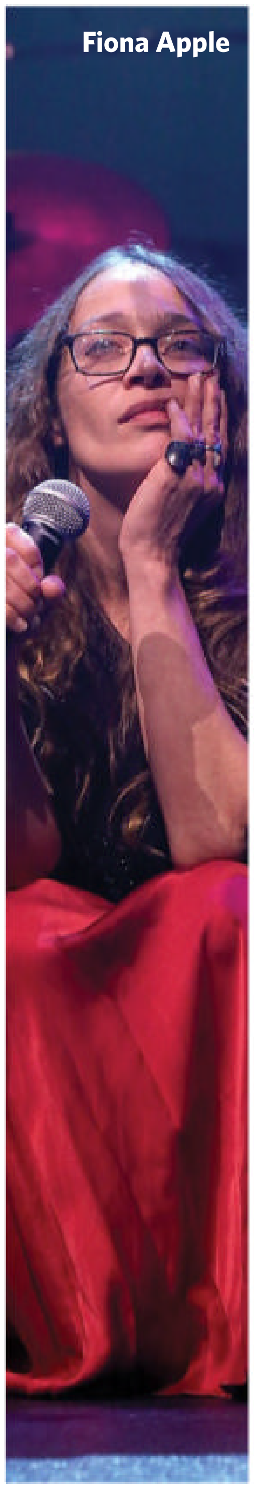
39 GINGER WILDHEART
Headzapoppin
ROUND RECORDS

No one does that fearless, schizoid mix of rage, joy and melancholia quite as naturally as Ginger Wildheart. With that in mind we weren't expecting any old power-pop cocktail from *Headzapoppin*, and we didn't get one. Whether revelling in monolithic monster hooks (*Meet My Killer*), sweary, idiosyncratic shape-shifting (*Catch That Stranger*), bouncy sugar and spit (*Yorvik (My Hood)*) or blissed out haze (*Love Is*), Ginger makes this shit look easy. In a year of uncertainties it's good to know you can still count on some things. **PG**
Killer track: *Meet My Killer*

38 THOSE DAMN CROWS
Point Of No Return EARACHE



In some virus-free parallel universe, 2020 was the year that Those Damn Crows really took off. Their strong debut *The Murder And The Motive*, plentiful gigging and slots at last year's Steelhouse and Download festivals earned the Bridgend rockers a sizeable fan base – who in February took this year's *Point Of No Return* to No.14 in the UK. Delivered with passion and guts by singer Shane Greenhall, that stadium-sized, radio-friendly album is the sound of a band hitting their stride, earning every bit of their growing success. **GM**
Killer track: *Who Did It*

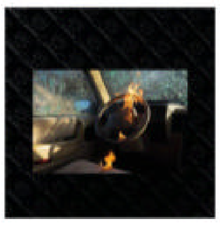

Fiona Apple

37 FIONA APPLE
Fetch The Bolt Cutters
EPIC/CLEAN SLATE

The American singer-songwriter's first album in eight years, recorded at home, is arguably the most experimental of 2020. Everything from cutlery to – brace yourself – her dead dog's bones becomes a musical instrument. Pets meow and bark in the background, while a clear-eyed and crystal-voiced Apple dissects a multitude of human relationships with a surgeon's steady hand and a surprising shot of humour.

A true work of art that sounds like nothing else. **EJ**
Killer track: *Newspaper*

36 GREG DULLI
Random Desire
BMG RIGHTS MANAGEMENT



With the Afghan Whigs and the Twilight Singers, Greg Dulli created a soulful art form from the self-loathing pit of his tormented psyche. It's little surprise, then, that while his first solo album attempts to break into the light – not least on the surprisingly funky *Scorpio* – he can't help but over-think any shot at contentment, his pessimism casting a beautiful gothic patina over the album's thoughtful 37 minutes. Beauty and the beast: Dulli has both living inside him in perfect harmony. **EJ**
Killer track: *A Ghost*

35 BLACK STONE CHERRY
The Human Condition MASCOT

Kentucky band of brothers Black Stone Cherry embrace their roles as musicians *and* producers on their third album for blues-savvy stable Mascot Records. Many of the songs on *The Human Condition* had been kept up their sleeve for years, which is reflected in the raw yet comfortable nature of the delivery. There are shitkickers, heartbreakers, warming singalongs (tender closing track *Keep On Keepin' On* is a favourite of ours)… they've even done a kick-ass cover of ELO's *Don't Bring Me Down*. We'll take that. **PG**
Killer track: *Keep On Keepin' On*

34 FM
Synchronized FRONTIERS

Few singers who emerged in the 80s sound as good now as they did back then. Thunder's Danny Bowes is one. Steve Overland, of AOR heroes FM, is another. On *Synchronized*, Overland's voice is as richly melodic as it was on the band's 80s classics *Indiscreet* and *Tough It Out*. Equally importantly, the great songs are still coming – the title track is a banger, *The Ghost Of You* a killer power ballad, and *Superstar* the perfect soundtrack to a summer day. **PE**
Killer track: *Superstar*

BLACK STONE CHERRY: MIKE RODWAY/PRESS; FIONA APPLE: GETTY

FM

Positivity, big choruses and trying to write their own *Billie Jean* has done the British melodic veterans good, and it's also served to get their latest album into the international charts.

Interview: **Paul Elliott**

FM singer Steve Overland reveals how Michael Jackson influenced the band's latest album *Synchronized*, why he's embarrassed by his nickname 'The Voice', and how during lockdown he made another album with former Free/Bad Company drummer Simon Kirke.

FM have always made feelgood music, and *Synchronized* is a perfect example of that.
We're a really positive band. We're mates as much as anything. We love what we do, and hopefully that comes across. Funnily enough, the last couple of albums have had a lot more AOR stuff on them, which we steered clear of for a while on some of the bluesier FM records. It's not deliberate, but that big-chorus thing has come back into the writing.

That's certainly true of *Synchronized*'s title track.
I came up with the idea for that one when we were in a club and I heard Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean*, with that great rolling bass line. I said: "Fuck, I love that song! I want to write a rock song like *Billie Jean*." And Jim [Fitzpatrick], our guitarist, said: "Alright then, off you go!" So that's how that came out like that, a bit funky! We're not scared to do different stuff. If a song like *Superstar* sounds a bit Americana it can still get on the album. A good song is a good song, and with this band it's always been about the songs.

What were your expectations for this album?
Well, it came out pretty much when the pandemic kicked off, but we decided just to go ahead with it, and it ended up charting in loads of places where we've never charted before – it went top-twenty in Switzerland! But we know we're not going to become a multi-platinum band. We just get on with what we do and enjoy doing it in our own little way.

Back in the eighties, when major label Epic was pushing you to become that big-selling band, did you always feel under pressure?
Yeah. The pressure was immense. When we were writing songs there was a lot of input from the record company. But now there's nobody telling us what we should be. We just are what we are. And it's great that we can still do it at the level we're at.

"When you're not able to go out and play live, a massive part of your life is gone. Touring is such a thrill."

How much has the pandemic hurt FM?
We're quite fortunate. FM has been set up in such a way that we've been furloughed. So we're getting paid. That's a bonus. But I know so many friends, musicians and crew people, who are really suffering. Right now there's so much uncertainty. Our tour has gone back to 2022, and when you're not able to go out and play live, a massive part of your life is gone. Touring is such a thrill, a great buzz, and it's what I've been doing for forty years. When everything went tits-up this year, at first I was thinking: "I quite like this." Because I get such little time at home. But one day, on TV there was highlights from one of the big festivals from last year, and it just hit me: "God, I miss this. This is what I do."

But you kept busy. You made another Lonerider album with drummer Simon Kirke, with whom you played in Wildlife in the early eighties before forming FM.
It's a great record, which will be out next year. I love those old Free and Bad Company albums, and we recorded it the same way those bands did, playing live, with not a lot of overdubs. It's stripped-back, seventies-style heavy rock.

It's amazing that you can still sing like you did in your twenties. Which is why you're known as 'The Voice'.
Let me say that it wasn't me who came up with that name. I didn't walk into a rehearsal one day saying: "Look, boys, from now on I want to be known as 'The Voice'. Never call me Steve again!"

How is it that your voice still so strong? What's the secret?
There's no secret to it. I'm just lucky. I never had a singing lesson, but a woman I know who's a vocal coach told me that I sing correctly. So I fluked that. It hacks me off when people say about other singers: "Oh, they're shit now", because it's really just the luck of the draw.

So as long as your luck holds out, FM will keep going?
Definitely. People say: "Do you not think you've done it and you've had enough of it?" But we don't think like that. We'll do it till we drop. There's no reason to stop.

Steve Earle & The Dukes

33 STEVE EARLE & THE DUKES

Ghosts Of West Virginia NEW WEST

A fully engaged Steve Earle is something to behold. *Ghosts Of West Virginia*, his twentieth studio album, on which he's backed by his trusty five-piece band, revolves around the Upper Big Branch coal mine explosion that killed 29 men in West Virginia in 2010, a tragedy compounded by the subsequent cover-up over lack of adequate safety. A return to the politically charged work of *Jerusalem* and *The Revolution Starts Now*, the album balances rage and compassion to stunning effect, soundtracked by country-blues drones and rustic mountain folk. **RH**

Killer track: *It's About Blood*

32 JAMES DEAN BRADFIELD

Even In Exile MONTYRAY

No stranger to big concepts – or to magically wrestling pieces of sprawling verse into gleaming rock anthems – Manic Street Preachers frontman James Dean Bradfield teams up with poet Patrick Jones (Manics bassist Nicky Wire's elder brother) to tell the tale of Chilean activist and musician Victor Jara, who was murdered by the Pinochet regime in 1973. On this elegant, heartfelt and unapologetically progressive record, Bradfield's unmistakable powerhouse voice is tempered by lush, Pink Floyd-influenced instrumentals like *Under The Mimosa Tree*.

Even In Exile is both a fitting tribute and a wonderful glimpse of Bradfield stretching his creative wings. **EJ**

Killer track: *The Boy From The Plantation*

31 WISHBONE ASH

Coat Of Arms SPV

This is the first album Wishbone Ash have recorded with guitarist Mark Abrahams alongside original Ash guitarist Andy Powell, who credits his new partner with lighting a fire under the band. A vintage Wishbone vibe informs stately hard rocker *We Stand As One* and echoes in the shifting moods of *It's Only You I See*. Those trademark twin-guitar harmonies ring out artfully over *Déjà Vu*'s folky foundation and *Drive*'s soaring chorus, and weave intricate trails through the shape-shifting title track. **RD**

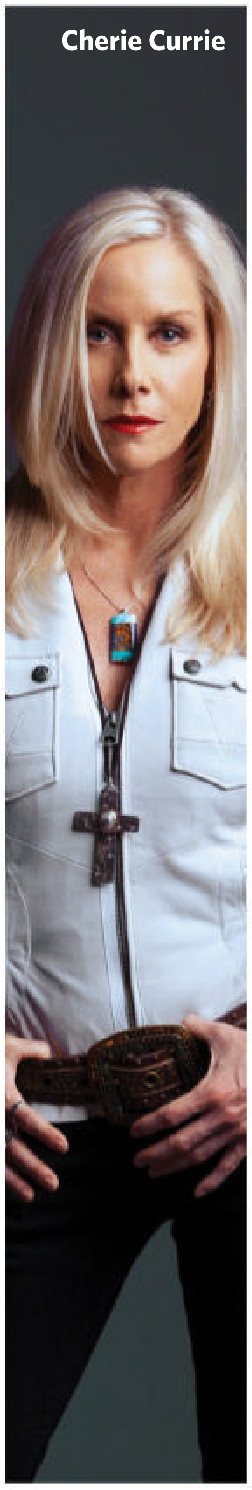
Killer track: *We Stand As One*

30 CHERIE CURRIE

BLACKHEART

The long-awaited return from the former Runaways vocalist swaggers exactly as it should. Packed with A-list guest spots (including Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan, Gunners Slash and Duff McKagan, Brody Dalle and Juliette Lewis) and produced by Matt Sorum, the album perfectly showcases Currie's enduring ability to rock (the GN'R-esque opener *Mr X*), roll (a muscular take on Suzi Quatro's *Roxy Roller*) and emote dramatically (an immense *The Air That I Breathe*). A triumphal closing romp through *Queens Of Noise* seals a splendid deal. **IF**

Killer track: *Queens Of Noise*

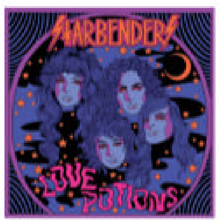


Cherie Currie

***'Love Potions* is the best-kept secret of 2020. A witchy glam-goth-punk masterpiece.'**

29 STARBENDERS

Love Potions SUMERIAN



Love Potions, Atlanta four-piece Starbenders' second album is the best kept secret of 2020; a witchy glam-goth-punk masterpiece that wears its massive 80s crush on its voluminous velvet sleeve. Ball-of-charisma frontwoman Kimi Shelter weaves her spell across *Bitches Be Witches* and *London* like the long-lost stepdaughter of Stevie Nicks and Anne Rice, while *Down & Out* and *Precious* beat with a pure-pop heart – albeit one

TOP 5 PROG ALBUMS

Words: **Jo Kendall**

1 DYBLE LONGDON

Between A Breath And A Breath

ENGLISH ELECTRIC/PLANE GROOVY

This clever, charming, sometimes quirky collection was sadly to be ex-Fairport Convention vocalist Judy Dyble's last record (paired with Big Big Train's David Longdon). Gorgeous arrangements and personal stories were set off by the stunning vocal affinity between two friends.

2 MOTORPSYCHO

The All Is One

STICKMAN/RUNE GRAMMOFON

3 ENSLAVED

Utgård NUCLEAR BLAST

4 AMY BIRKS

All That I Am And All That I Was MAB

5 KAVUS TORABI

Hip To The Jag BELIEVERS ROAST

STEVE EARLE & THE DUKES: © JACOB BLICKENSTAFF 2019/PRESS; CHERIE CURRIE: ROBERT SEBREE/PRESS

draped in black lace and surrounded by 13 candles. The night has rarely sounded so alluring. **DE**
Killer track: *London*

28 THE ALLMAN BETTS BAND
Bless Your Heart BMG

Devon Allman and Duane Betts proudly continue to fly the flag for the southern rock tradition pioneered by their respective fathers Duane and Dickey. Now joined by bassist Berry Oakley Jr (another chip off the Allmans block) in the seven-man line-up, they stretch out brilliantly in all directions, from the gothic-rock rumble of *Ashes Of My Lovers* to the Johnny Cash-influenced *Much Obliged*. The essence of the band is distilled in *Savannah's Dream*, a glorious 12-minute, 6/8-time epic, with intertwining guitar parts soaring on a magic carpet of organ and syncopated percussion. Sublime. **DS**
Killer track: *Savannah's Dream*

27 DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS
The New OK ATO

Not content with one remarkable album in 2020, Georgia's finest roots-rockers promptly gave us a second. *The New OK*, released just nine months after *The Unravelling*, was devised as a response to a fractious summer of protest, riots and political unrest in the US, and framed by the global pandemic. Led by frontman Patterson Hood, the Truckers spit fire and fury on songs like *Watching The Orange Clouds* and the title track, and finish off with a boiling cover of the Ramones' *The KKK Took My Baby Away*. **RH**
Killer track: *Watching The Orange Clouds*

26 BIFFY CLYRO
A Celebration Of Endings
14TH FLOOR/WARNER

One of the reasons why Biffy Clyro steadily became one of the UK's biggest rock bands is their steadfast refusal to give a solitary fuck what anyone thinks of them and their music, leaving them to run free and wild in their own imaginations.

A Celebration Of Endings, their eighth album, is a spectacular culmination of two decades of musical twists and turns, one moment seething and biting, the next settling into a singalong groove that won't quit, the next weaving exquisite emotional beauty as delicate and intricate as a spider web. The end result is a deeply moving, breathtakingly intense experience. **EJ**
Killer track: *Cop Syru*

DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS: DANNY CLINCH/PRESS

DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS

Unable to tour early 2020's *The Unraveling* album, instead they wrote some new songs and dug into the 'unused' drawer and made another cracker.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

Drive-By Truckers have been especially vocal this past year. The American rockers released two essential albums – *The Unraveling* and *The New OK* – at either end of 2020, both of which examined the effects of ordinary lives against a socio-political backdrop of turmoil and rage. Now a resident of Portland, having relocated from his native South four years ago, band leader Patterson Hood also found himself at the centre of events during the summer.

How has 2020 been for you?
It's been shitty as fuck, the worst year. And I say that from a position of being pretty lucky. None of my family has gotten sick, we're all healthy. Financially the pandemic happened at a pretty vulnerable time for the band and for us as a family, but so far we're eking it out. I have to thank our management for finding creative ways to bring money in, and our fan base for really supporting us.

Drive-By Truckers bookended 2020 with two albums, *The Unraveling* and *The New OK*. In their own way, each of them took the temperature of the times.
Even with this tiny bit of distance, I look back on our last three albums [starting with 2016's *American Band*] as an unintended trilogy. Politics and history have been two things we've dealt with over and over as a band, from our first album onwards. The big difference with *American Band* is we set that record so firmly in the present, politically. You never know how any music is going to age, but I think we've documented this moment in time more than most bands have.

Is it true that *The New OK* wasn't planned?
Yes. It wasn't my idea initially, so my first reaction was: "Oh great, now we can have *two* brand-new records that we can't tour behind!" But I'd just written *The New OK* [song] and *Watching The Orange Clouds*, then I started digging through what we had. *The Distance* was written a good while ago, but it didn't really fit anywhere. And it became a big part of this record. We also had [the Ramones'] *The KKK Took My Baby Away*, which we've been playing live for years. So we ended up with an album. Which is an endearing way to go about it.

Did *Watching The Orange Clouds* come from seeing the Portland demonstrations first-hand?
Absolutely. I wrote it the weekend after George Floyd was murdered, when all hell broke loose. The first weekend of the protests was particularly ugly, then it escalated and they sent in the goddamn feds. Our mayor got tear-gassed, for Chrissake. I also wrote *The New OK* after spending an evening down there in the middle of the protest. As much as Portland is known as this liberal, progressive city, we're also surrounded by rural Oregon, which can be super-conservative. And there's a huge white supremacist movement in our state. So we've had a lot of people coming in from out of town. The mood among the protestors was angry, but it was uplifting and also very powerful. And it was very positive.

Conversely, against all the turmoil the Truckers seem to be in a stable place right now.
This line-up has been together for the last eight years, which is longer than the lifetime of a lot of bands. The Truckers will turn twenty-five next June, and to have that kind of stability is just amazing to me. We were on such a high note when it suddenly ended this last winter. We had a huge European tour booked. I want to play, I want to get back out there! So we're ready to go as soon as it's safe.

STONE TEMPLE PILOTS

With the electric guitars spending most of the recording sessions in their cases, the band crafted a mostly light-touch acoustic album that could well come to be seen as being among their best.

Words: **Grant Moon**

"*Perdida* is the kind of record I've always wanted to make," says Jeff Gutt, who's now three years and two albums into his tenure as Stone Temple Pilots's lead vocalist. "You're on the road for so long and you've got all these loud amplifiers and drums… then you kinda want to just sit back and write a song by the fire. It's good to take a deep breath and put out something beautiful."

Perhaps unfairly, 'beautiful' isn't the first word that comes to mind when picturing these battle-scarred rockers, who arrived with a bang in 1992 with their debut album *Core*. So when *Perdida* was released back in February it was a nice surprise in a long year of many nasty ones. After 2018's hard-edged self-titled album, it was a predominantly acoustic selection of pared-back, elegantly arranged songs, heavy with sad, wistful titles such as *Fare Thee Well, Three Wishes* and *I Once Sat At Your Table*.

There's a little *Sticky Fingers* in here (*She's My Queen*'s strummed riff has a hint of *Moonlight Mile* about it), and also some lilting bossa by way of Laurel Canyon (the achingly lovely *Years*, sung by the band's bassist/songwriter Robert DeLeo), all with a dusting of exquisite strings, alto sax, flute, even a marxophone (a fretless zither). These layers add colour to a warm album rich in folk, flamenco and high lonesome inflections.

As catchy mid-tempo closer *Sunburst* tails off and the band fade away, they also come into clearer focus perhaps, as people. This is music made by middle-aged men who have been through some shit of late. Estrangement, custody battles, heartbreak, loss (for which 'perdida' is the Spanish word, in feminine form) – all these heavy subjects are here, but sublimated rather than brashly stated.

"There's plenty of things to be melancholy about," Gutt says with a sad laugh. "This record was more for us, and for all of us it's a very personal one, because we talked about things on the road, about what each other was going through. If I only wrote about myself I would have run out of stuff a long time ago. I try to see life through other people's eyes, and come from a place of compassion."

When Gutt first auditioned for the band (to replace Chester Bennington, who in turn had replaced original frontman Scott Weiland) it clearly helped that he could punch the same tonal buttons as Weiland, who helped the Pilots secure their place at grunge's top table back in the 90s with their early albums. Crucially, Gutt also has real songwriting simpatico with the longstanding members – Robert DeLeo, guitarist brother Dean DeLeo and drummer Eric Kretz, in whose Pasadena studio *Perdida* came together.

Dean remembers sitting with Gutt, an acoustic guitar in his lap, "and Jeff was coming up with his melodies, and that's when we felt the songs were really taking shape. That was the beautiful moment when the album opened up and allowed me to really know what the songs were going to be. Jeff is brilliant at that. It was a lot like working with Scott. Jeff had this really great sense of what each song was asking for, and a great sense of melody and delivery. His vocal performance on this album is incredible."

"Jeff really stepped up," adds Robert. "He needed to. It is a very personal record, and he really did amazing work at seeing where he was with this music personally. After making one record [with the band, 2018's *Stone Temple Pilots*] and then going on to this, you either feel it or you don't. And he did feel exactly where it needed to go. We had time on the road to express to each other where we were and mould this into what it became."

Looking back at the STP catalogue, they've always flavoured their heavier moments with sweeter, gentler interludes. They'll always be known for amped-up anthems like *Sex Type Thing, Plush* and *Interstate Love Song*, but the roots of this latest album are in the band's softer moments, such as *Creep* (from that 1992 smash debut *Core*), *And So I Know* (*Tiny Music… Songs From The Vatican Gift Shop*), *A Song For Sleeping* (*Shangri-La Dee Da*).

"This time we dedicated a whole album to that expression rather than flavours of it," says Robert. "Everyone has a style they listen to, but it really comes down to what's deep inside your soul, and that can come out in many different ways. As a listener I find Brazilian and bossa and country music to be very soulful, and that's kind of where my expression comes from and goes to."

> **"If the DeLeos walk in and say: 'I've got a song', you think: 'Well this is going to be great!'"**
>
> **Jeff Gutt**

The DeLeo Brothers' eclectic musical sense was forged in the late 60s/early 70s, as they grew up in a multi-generational, music-loving household in New Jersey, where you could be soothed by the sounds of Antonio Carlos Jobím, serenaded by Andy Williams or grabbed by the throat by Hendrix.

"That was always the blueprint," says Dean. "If you go back to *Core*, it was always about staying away from typical 'rock' power chords, and using beautiful, non-conventional ones. We took a lot from Jobím, from all that great sixties and seventies pop – the stuff Richard Carpenter was writing [with The Carpenters] – but we'd play it on a Les Paul through a Marshall."

If these iconic rock implements are on *Perdida*, then they're dialled down to a tasteful level, in keeping with the downbeat quality of the album as a whole. In a parallel universe, 2020 would have seen the band take the album on tour; the foundation of an acoustic set encompassing those more subtle, unplugged moments of the past nearly 30 years. But even before covid could do its worst, the tour was cancelled when a disc in Jeff Gutt's spine disintegrated, leading to invasive replacement surgery and a painful recovery process. He's fully restored now and raring to go, but for the time being he and the other three Pilots are biding their time, writing at their homes in LA, offering up live-streamed performances. And they're all rightly proud of this year's album.

"It's so refreshing to be in a band of professionals," Gutt enthuses. "If the DeLeos walk in and say: 'I've got a song', you think: 'Well this is going to be *great!*' It's been a huge thing for me to join such amazing dudes. Now I've just gotta not screw it up."

25 STONE TEMPLE PILOTS

Perdida RHINO

It shouldn't have been a surprise that Stone Temple Pilots had such a heart-rendingly beautiful and mature album in their locker. With Dean DeLeo's distortion pedals left in his gig bag, *Perdida*'s clean, gentle, mostly acoustic palette sheds burnished, autumnal light on the rock-solid songwriting that has underpinned even their most fuzz-drenched moments, from 1992 debut *Core* onwards. Singer Jeff Gutt sets some ghosts to rest here, sounding at home in his role on this reflective, melancholy addition to the Pilots' impressive catalogue. **GM**

Killer track: *Years*

NIA REPU

THE EP OF 2020

How The Damned hit a latter-day peak with *The Rockfield Files.*

Words: **Ian Fortnam**

Rarely does a year pass in the ongoing saga of The Damned without incident. They're that kind of band. The first UK purveyors of punk on to vinyl, the first to the US, to split, to re-form. They've been this Damned, that Damned, the other Damned, they've even been the Doomed (both by name and by nature). But in recent times they've pulled off a late-career renaissance that few could have ever expected.

In 2017 their core surviving founding members – vocalist Dave Vanian and guitarist Captain Sensible – along with keyboard player Monty Oxymoron and drummer Andrew 'Pinch' Pinching reunited with bassist Paul Gray (with whom they'd previously recorded *The Black Album* and *Strawberries*). The re-formed quintet decamped to New York City where they recorded the *Evil Spirits* album with Bowie/Bolan producer Tony Visconti. It reached No.7 in the UK – their first UK album chart entry since the 80s, their highest UK album chart entry since… forever.

The Damned were on a roll. The Royal Albert Hall followed, before a triumphant 2019 Halloween show (the quite spectacular The Night of A Thousand Vampires at London's iconic Palladium) gave every indication of being the very pinnacle of the greatest comeback since Lazarus felt well enough to pop out for fags. But, as so often happens to bands incautious enough to name themselves The Damned, fate flipped them the finger as Pinch, their 20-year veteran drummer, unexpectedly tendered his resignation.

In October, as speculation mounted as to their future plans, the band released the results of their final recording sessions with Pinch, at Monmouthshire's legendary Rockfield Studios, a four-track EP.

The Rockfield Files' lead single, *Keep 'Em Alive,* is a bona fide classic, the ultimate Damned line-up all doing what they do best: Vanian's richly rounded baritone selling a dynamite psych-pop hook, Sensible's ferociously incisive lead lines interweaving with Gray's Entwistle-referencing Rickenbacker bass runs, Monty accentuating mood, Pinch driving ever forward from the rear. Its ecological message hammered home by a bee's-eye view video clip, *Keep 'Em Alive* is the very definition of classic 21st-century Damned. *Noise Noise Noise*-alike *Manipulator* follows, all gang vocals and amphetamine tempo, while *The Spider & The Fly* showcases the gothic baroque grooves that run through The Damned like veins through blue stilton, before an extended version of their 2019 anthology *Black Is The Night*'s title track closes proceedings with an epic flourish.

Even before any speculation as to their next move could take hold, The Damned called a socially distanced press conference at London's Roundhouse to announce that the four original members – Vanian, Sensible, guitarist Brian James and drummer Rat Scabies – are to reunite for a series of UK shows in July 2021.

"They said it could never happen," Sensible offered at one point. "So much for animosity and malice between this bunch of individuals… Nobody thought we'd ever get together again, but here we are."

Here indeed. But where next? Your guess is probably as good as ours (or theirs, for that matter), but it's bound to be one hell of a ride.

24 THE TEXAS GENTLEMEN

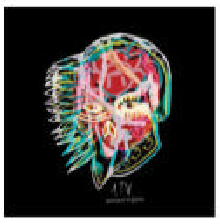
Floor It!!! NEW WEST

Having begun as a go-to backing band for any number of big names, The Texas Gentlemen finally come into their own with their second album, an ebullient set forged from the traditions of the 60s and 70s, when country, funk, R&B, psychedelia and southern rock were free to boogie. *Floor It!!!* carries echoes of Little Feat, The Band, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Leon Russell, Elton John and more, carried forward by the energy of guitar-playing frontmen Nik Lee and Daniel Creamer. Truly a tonic for the times. **RH**

Killer track: *Ain't Nothin' New*

23 ALL THEM WITCHES

Nothing As The Ideal NEW WEST



The latest transmission from this spaced-out Nashville trio alters your head space like few other records released this year. Emerging from the gloom with the intriguing, disquieting *Saturnine & Iron Jaw*, this intricate, cleverly composed modern-psych masterpiece combines the atmospheric heft of The Doors, arcane Zeppelin-esque rock textures, and cool stoner riffs to boot. Ben McLeod's guitars chug and chime to thrilling effect, and singer Charles Michael Parks Jr. keeps a hip grasp on the woozy psych sections and Americana beats alike.

Brilliant. **GM**

Killer track: *Rats In Ruin*

'*Nothing As The Ideal* alters your head space like few other records released this year.'

22 TYLER BRYANT & THE SHAKEDOWN

Pressure

After a blaze of early publicity prompted by the 17-year-old Tyler Bryant's precocious talent, the following decade or so saw he and his band release too much that was unoriginal and predictable. But, temporarily reduced to a three-piece and woodshedding in the basement studio, lockdown constraints sparked a flow of quality songwriting. One track became two, two became three… and eventually they had a 13-song fourth album proper, *Pressure*, an invigorating cocktail of rock and blues, laced with oodles of slide guitar and sweet harmonies. **NJ**

Killer track: *Like The Old Me*

THE DAMNED: WILL IRELAND

The Cadillac Three

21 THE DIRTY KNOBS

Wreckless Abandon BMG

Nearly 50 years of playing guitar alongside Tom Petty taught Mike Campbell a lot – except maybe how to choose a cool band name.

That wry humour resurfaces on this album in *Sugar* and the JJ Cale-like *Fuck That Guy*, but Campbell remains serious about his craft: welding great stories to superb melodies. The arrangements (co-produced by George Drakoulias, and including a guest appearance by fellow Heartbreaker Benmont Tench) range from heavy blues to jingle-jangle country, and Campbell's singing voice will appeal to Petty fans too. **NJ**

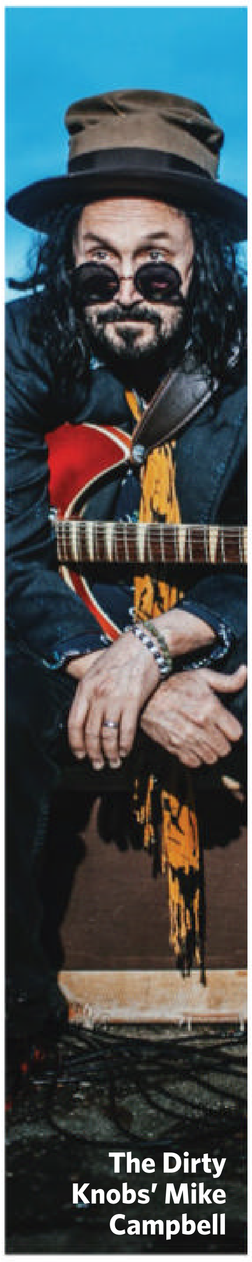
Killer track: *Wreckless Abandon*

20 THE CADILLAC THREE

Country Fuzz BIG MACHINE

'We got tunes? Check. We got girls? Check', Jaren Johnston sings in *Crackin' Cold Ones With The Boys*. And The Cadillac Three certainly have a gold-plated, country-fried, sure-fire winner on their hands with *Country Fuzz*, their fourth album. These Nashville cats are as deep into their blue-collar, Southern-man world of cars, girls, whisky, weed, dirt roads and country rock as you can get. And the stories they tell on this album run rich and deep. Hellraising? They've got it nailed. Oh yeah, and just as we were pulling this list together they went and released *another* cracking album, the luxuriantly funked up *Tabasco & Sweet Tea*. Turns out 2020 wasn't such a bad year for these three amigos. **DS**

Killer track: *Slow Rollin'*



The Dirty Knobs' Mike Campbell

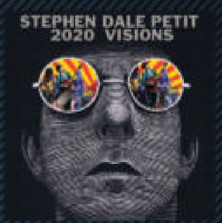
MIKE CAMPBELL: SHEVA KAFAI

TOP 5 BLUES ALBUMS

Words: **Henry Yates**

1 STEPHEN DALE PETIT

2020 Visions 333



Petit has been nudging greatness for years, and *2020 Visions* is his masterpiece. The Anglo-American guitarist's touch made you shiver on more traditional moments like *The Ending Of The End*, but it's his explorations that resonate, with *The Fall Of America*'s throb-and-churn dystopia blues as ambitious as anything you'll hear this year.

2 WALTER TROUT

Ordinary Madness MASCOT/PROVOGUE

3 JAMES HUNTER SIX

Nick Of Time DAPTONE

4 WHEN RIVERS MEET

We Fly Free ONE ROAD

5 WATERMELON SLIM

Traveling Man NORTHERN BLUES

19 THE PRETENDERS

Hate For Sale BMG

A knowingly sharp album title. Chrissie Hynde is at her best translating hatred of something or someone, even herself, into three minutes of pure pop poetry, and she's at her best on this record.

Hate For Sale is a big improvement on 2016's *Alone*, every track a hand-in-glove co-write with guitarist James Walbourne, empowered by the returning Martin Chambers's whip-crack drumming. No two songs are alike, but each could be a single, indicating that The Pretenders are once again at the top of their game, with early-80s sparkle. **NJ**

Killer track: *The Buzz*

METALLICA

Drummer Lars Ulrich on lockdown, missing live music, and what the future holds for his band.

Words: **Paul Elliott** Photo: **Ross Halfin**

This year, like every other band Metallica have been off the road. Lars Ulrich tells *Classic Rock* that in all that downtime he's kept up his chops by playing along to their last record, *Hardwired… To Self Destruct.* "Another record I've played along to is *Rage Against The Machine*, that first album ['92]," he says."That has been the soundtrack to this pandemic for me. I'm just blasting those songs, and they sound more relevant and more contemporary than they ever have."

At least you have an outlet for all that frustration.
Ha ha. That's right. And I guess Rage Against The Machine is perfect for that. I remember the last time I saw them, at the LA Coliseum in 2011. It was a hot, sweaty night, with that energy that you get in LA when you have those big concerts, and seeing seventy thousand people yell: *"Fuck you I won't do what you tell me!"* was one of the most insane concert moments I've ever experienced.

> **"It's hard for me to imagine that we'll ever stop making records."**
> **Lars Ulrich**

How much have you missed that in the past year – the thrill of being at a great gig?
I just think of how lucky I've been in the past, all the great shows I've seen. I saw Thin Lizzy multiple times between '76 and '80 – incredible. I saw Motörhead multiple times, '79 to '81 – insane. I saw AC/DC open for Black Sabbath in 1976. And I saw AC/DC headline in Copenhagen in '77, and Bon Scott was so great, you couldn't takes your eyes off him. That was Bon in his heyday, with the tight jeans, the tennis shoes, the shirt off. And I loved the way he would hold the mic with the cord rolled up two or three times, and he would stand out there at the very edge of the stage when he wasn't singing, stand over on Malcolm's side and let Angus bounce around in front of him…

You also saw Ritchie Blackmore in his prime, with both Deep Purple and Rainbow.
I saw the first show Deep Purple played with David Coverdale and Glenn Hughes, and Rainbow played in Copenhagen a lot.

It wasn't just Ritchie's guitar playing that was so impressive, it was also his personality – the Man In Black. He was always saying what was on his mind, even if it was a little contrary. Or he was winding people up – he was known as a bit of a prankster. And then there were times when he would be a bit aloof. But there was what I would call an honesty to him. It always felt like he was true to whatever mood and the moment. There was something very authentic about Blackmore, and I guess I've always been kind of attracted to rock'n'roll when it has elements of danger and unpredictability. That to me is the spirit of rock'n'roll, and he was the guy for me. Bon Scott, Jim Morrison, Axl Rose, the Gallagher brothers, they all had elements of this.

When you think about getting on stage again with Metallica, are you ever reminded of the excitement you felt back in 1982 when the band played live for the first time?
Well, the interesting thing about that first gig was it was just Metallica, on a Sunday night at Radio City in Anaheim, California. And on the very first song, *Hit The Lights*, Dave Mustaine broke a guitar string, and so the space between the first song and the second song seemed like a never-ending eternity. It felt like my whole life! I was just sitting up there trying to hide behind these drums. It was the strangest thing. But Dave got the guitar back together and we ended up playing the rest of the set. But there was a significant lull there. Trust me, I start shivering just talking about it now.

There was a new Metallica album out this year, *S&M2*, recorded live with the San Francisco Symphony. How does it stack up against the band's previous albums?
I don't think like that at all. Each record to me is a picture of a time period. 1988, *…And Justice For All*, that was what we did and we made all those choices, and I'm happy accepting it. Sometimes I think why did we do that and what were we thinking, without necessarily wanting to change it. But of the ones that we've done, it's with *Hardwired* that I have the fewest bewildered questions about the choices we made.

Have you started thinking about the next album yet?
It's going to be the best album we've ever done! Insert the rest of the clichés – it's the heaviest thing, the coolest… But all kidding aside, if it wasn't because we thought that the best record was still ahead of us, then why keep doing it? In Metallica we love the creative process, and it's hard for me to imagine that we'll ever stop making records.

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18 **METALLICA**
S&M2 BLACKENED

"Go big or go home" was the ethos driving Metallica's belated symphonic *S&M* sequel – and they went huge. Recorded at two epic hometown shows and backed by the San Francisco Symphony, this is metal on a blockbuster scale. The old standards sound even more grandiose than they did on the original *S&M* album, while lesser-loved recent songs gain a dazzling new shine. But a human heart beats amid the multitude of moving parts, never more apparent than on a spine-tingling reimagining of immortal Cliff Burton showcase *(Anesthesia) Pulling Teeth*. **DE**

Killer track: *The Day That Never Comes*

MASSIVE WAGONS

Now with a Top 10 album under their belt, the quintet have spent much of 2020 keeping their creativity going and remaining optimistic.

Words: **Polly Glass**

Back in June, as their album hovered tantalisingly in the UK midweek chart, Massive Wagons ran a treadmill marathon in aid of mental health charity MIND. The goal was to capitalise on the goodwill generated in the build-up to the release of *House Of Noise* – fuelled, to varying degrees, by their own mental health experiences.

"It sounds so silly and throwaway, just to be able to do what you want," singer Baz Mills says over the phone from the Wagons HQ in Lancashire, "but the implications for people's mental health, being stuck at home… People eat themselves up about these things."

When the week's chart was finalised, Wagons were at No.9, neatly sandwiched between Lewis Capaldi and Harry Styles. To call it a surreal, triumphant punch in the air for rock circa 2020 would be an understatement. "We were confident in the material," guitarist Adam Thistlethwaite says, "but it was the people who like the band and follow the band. We owe it all to them, really. It was them shouting about it, telling their mates about it, playing the singles."

"You get a feel for it in the months leading up to it," says Mills. "Y'know: 'We've got a shot at this, the songs are going down well.' Especially *In It Together*."

That flagship single could have been written expressly for March 2020 (it actually came to life pre-covid), when it first blasted through our speakers. An immaculately timed burst of rock community spirit, its loveable Wildhearts-meets-Darkness-meets-Quo vibe was just what the world needed.

"That was exactly why we decided to go ahead with the release," Mills says. "We thought, well, this might bring a little bit of sunshine and normality.'"

Since that week they've filled the space with regular videos, music and chit-chat on their 'Wagons World' YouTube channel. They played shows, too, most of them livestreams but also two warmly received, socially distanced shows at the Waterloo bar in Blackpool. They've also started writing their next album, and are now entertaining the bizarre possibility that it might get released before they've been able to tour *House Of Noise*.

When *Classic Rock* talks to the band the world is at an odd juncture. We're in the middle of the second national lockdown, but serious hopes for a vaccine have started to heat up. How optimistic are they for 2021 at this point?

"Doing what we do, you're kinda forced into being blindly optimistic, because you can't afford to wait and see," Thistlethwaite replies. "You've got to assume the best. Which goes completely against my nature, because I'm a totally pessimistic miserable git, but you've got to be like that. When the all-clear does come, it's gonna be quick."

"We've got to keep this stuff going, even if it might not happen," Mills adds. "What's the alternative? Go quiet for a year until it's safe to come out again? We can't do that."

Time will tell when shows can finally happen again. In the meantime, how's Christmas in the Wagons households?

"Chaos, kids!" father-of-two Thistlethwaite says with a laugh.

"It's just been full-on band every day all the time," says Mills. "We're fortunate enough to do this for a job. We're in this unit every day doing band things, so Christmas can hopefully be a time of… Hopefully I won't see any of the band for a few weeks!"

"Sit in a quiet room…" Thistlethwaite continues, sounding a little wistful.

"Just chilling out with family," Mills concludes. "Bit of James Bond and chicken sandwiches."

17 JASON ISBELL & THE 400 UNIT

Reunions SOUTHEASTERN

Nashville star Jason Isbell gave indie record stores the first bite of this, his seventh album, and the karma was paid back with the greatest acclaim of his career.

A world away from the trucks and babes of drive-time country, *Reunions* is a personal excavation that spoke for many of us, with Isbell exploring subjects ranging from the bumpy road back from addiction (*It Gets Easier*) to divorce seen through the eyes of a child (*Dreamsicle*). It was a pleasure getting to know him better. **HY**

Killer track: *It Gets Easier*

16 OZZY OSBOURNE

Ordinary Man EPIC

A month after confirming his Parkinson's diagnosis, the beleaguered Prince Of Darkness released the twelfth album that he says "saved my fucking life". Ozzy doubted he had the strength to make *Ordinary Man*. Turns out he had ample, yowling a storm on standouts like *Eat Me* and *Straight To Hell*, and even sounding like his ant-snorting younger self on the anarchic *It's A Raid*. Throw in the parting-shot lyrics of *Under The Graveyard*, and this album would have served just fine as a full stop. But don't book the retirement home yet, says Ozzy. **HY**

Killer track: *Straight To Hell*

15 LARKIN POE

Self Made Man TRICKI WOO

Their current home might be Nashville, the motherland of modern country, but the Lovell sisters' sixth album feels far more rooted in the Mississippi Delta circa 1930. A sweet yet smoke-filled fusion of slide guitar, percussive hand claps and invigorated early blues sensibilities, *Self Made Man* is laced with a darkness that's missing in most of their Nashville peers. The two sisters have been singing together since they were kids, and it shows brilliantly in their harmonies – not so much pitch perfect as 'in their bones'. Easily one of the most exciting blues records of 2020. **PG**

Killer track: *Back Down South*

14 MASSIVE WAGONS

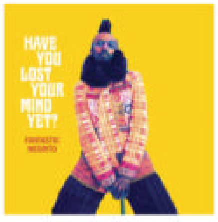
House Of Noise EARACHE

Last year Massive Wagons celebrated their tenth anniversary by proving their mettle in the big league, supporting Lynyrd

MASSIVE WAGONS: JOHN MCMURTRIE/PRESS

Skynyrd and Status Quo. Despite the current pandemic curtailing their live plans this year, they've captured an effervescent energy in the 12 fat-free tracks that make up *House Of Noise*. In opener *In It Together*, Baz Mills sings: *'Give 'em a lesson in good-time rock'n'roll'*, and that's precisely what the Wagons deliver throughout, fusing walloping riffs and cast-iron choruses. **RD**
Killer track: *Freak City*

13 FANTASTIC NEGRITO
Have You Lost Your Mind Yet?
COOKING VINYL



A smart, cautiously hopeful head on world-worn shoulders, Fantastic Negrito was well placed to make a record about the widespread mental health crisis afflicting modern times.

Have You Lost Your Mind Yet? builds on the rocked up blues of its predecessor, 2018's *Please Don't Be Dead*, spicing it up with Prince-esque funk and the sort of soulful, literate fire that Stevie Wonder would approve of. By turns enormous fun (see irresistibly sassy opener *Chocolate Samurai*) and heartbroken (e.g. the exquisitely angst-ridden *How Long?*), it's vibrant medicine for old and young souls alike. **PG**
Killer track: *Chocolate Samurai*

12 BOB DYLAN
Rough And Rowdy Ways
COLUMBIA

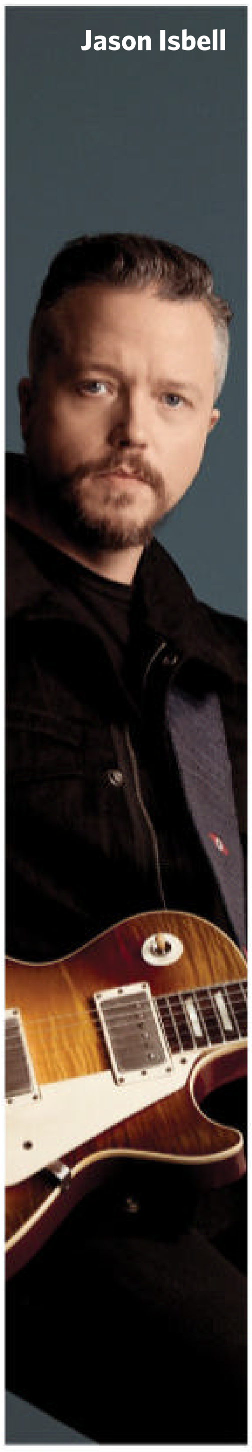
After three records that raided the great American songbook, we had Bob Dylan pegged as a fine interpreter but something of a spent creative force. In June, as though awakened from slumber by the unfolding awfulness around us, *Rough And Rowdy Ways* changed all that.

This is his first collection of originals since 2012's *Tempest*, and its singles are electrifying – try *False Prophet*'s brittle swagger, for starters. But for Bob-heads the picks were the extended album closers *Key West (Philosopher Pirate)* and *Murder Most Foul*, each of those songs warranting a lifetime's study. **HY**
Killer track: *False Prophet*

11 BOB MOULD
Blue Hearts MERGE

Former Hüsker Dü singer/guitarist Bob Mould mans the barricades 2020-style with what he calls "the catchiest batch of protest songs I've ever written", in the shape of *Blue Hearts*. Nowadays sounding somewhat like the bands that he influenced – notably Foo Fighters and Dinosaur Jr. on *Next Generation* and *Everyth!ng* [sic] *To You* – he unleashes a torrent of righteous invective against the United States political establishment. A succession of fast, loud, angry, insistent two-minute tracks bash into each other like cars in a motorway pile-up: *Next Generation*, *American Crisis*, *Fireball*… A one-man volcano explodes. **DS**
Killer track: *Siberian Butterfly*

Fantastic Negrito


Jason Isbell

FANTASTIC NEGRITO: WILLEM WOUTERSE/PRESS; JASON ISBELL: ALYSSE GAFKJEN/PRESS

TOP 5 AOR ALBUMS

Words: **Dave Ling**

1 VEGA
Grit Your Teeth FRONTIERS

They're still no closer to their previously stated goal of *Classic Rock* cover artist status, but British band Vega get better and better. Album number five ramps up the heaviness just a little, although they continue to weld unashamedly poppy nuances to their framework of gargantuan melodic hooks and blistering guitar shredding.

2 LIONHEART
The Reality Of Miracles
METALVILLE

3 PERFECT PLAN
Time For A Miracle FRONTIERS

4 ONE DESIRE
Midnight Empire FRONTIERS

5 NEWMAN
Ignition AOR HEAVEN

10 BLUE ÖYSTER CULT
The Symbol Remains FRONTIERS

In many regards, 2020 has been the kind of year that most of us will most likely be seeing off the premises with a boot up the glutes and a two-fingered salute come midnight on New Year's Eve. But there have been musical highlights amid the gloom (this list of albums is evidence of that), not least the studio-album return of Blue Öyster Cult with *The Symbol Remains*.

Almost two decades after its predecessor *Curse Of The Hidden Mirror* (2001), BÖC match quantity with quality across its 14 tracks. The heavy edge that once saw them pegged as America's Sabbath resurfaces on *That Was Me*, with Eric Bloom snarling with gleeful malevolence over a concussive riff. The sinister mood of classic-era BÖC permeates *The Alchemist*, while Buck Dharma's lighter vocal approach provides contrast on *Florida Man* and *Box In My Head*. If it turns out that *The Symbol Remains* ends these veterans' recording career, they'll be going out on a high. **RD**
Killer track: *The Alchemist*

H.E.A.T

Meet the new guy, it's the old guy... Sweden's melodic rock torch bearers on Eurovision, Def Leppard and a change of man at the mic.

Words: **Polly Glass**

Back in the early 2000s, H.e.a.t were a bunch of kids in Upplands Vasby, Sweden, dreaming of being somewhere else. Somewhere with palm trees instead of snow, where Def Leppard and Iron Maiden ruled instead of Britney Spears and the Backstreet Boys. Since forming in 2007 they've made good on those dreams (creatively at least), and this year hit a gleeful, glossy new peak with *H.e.a.t II*.

Most recently, though, they've announced the departure of Erik Grönwall, H.e.a.t's fireball frontman of the past decade. "There's no hard feelings whatsoever between us," says keyboard player/co-producer Jona Tee, who's spent much of 2020 producing records for other bands. "He's been giving us his blessing."

Grönwall's place has been filled by H.e.a.t's first singer, Kenny Leckremo. Tee tells us more.

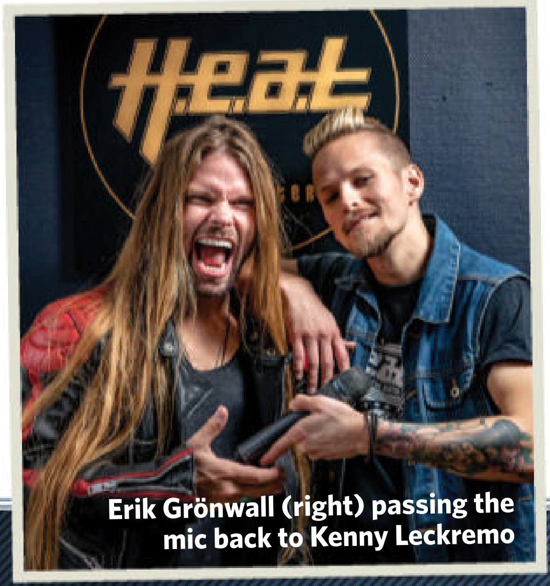
How did that line-up shift come about?
We kind of felt that Erik grew a bit distant, really, so we just had a grown-up chat: "So dude, do you wanna do this?" He came to the decision that it was better to leave and focus on other stuff, and let us keep doing H.e.a.t. We've known about this since February or March, so we were like, well, should we keep going? Because it's a huge loss without Erik. He's such a great frontman. The only option we all wanted to even try was to talk to Kenny again.

What has Kenny been up to for the past ten years?
He's been transforming himself into a rock'n'roll god, basically. We asked him in the summer, and he was like: "I'm ready for this!" He's been doing shows in Spain, a bunch of covers, that sort of thing. He's been touring all over Spain and he's been living there as well. He put out an album two or three years ago called *Spectra*, which is a bit proggy compared to H.e.a.t. You should check it out.

***H.e.a.t II* is such a slick, tight record. Would you consider yourselves to be perfectionists?**
I don't think I'm a perfectionist. I appreciate 'vibe', and on the albums from the seventies not everything is perfect. There can be some abnormalities, some weird guitar, something to keep it alive. I like to keep those things, the small errors, the perfect imperfections.

As one of the album's producers, what are the records you really admire sound-wise?
Sound-wise I really like *Dark Horse* by Nickelback. It's produced by Mutt Lange. I love the sound, it's so huge. And from the eighties I would say [Def Leppard's] *Hysteria* sounds amazing.

Is *Hysteria* a record you grew up with?
Well I'd heard the songs since I was a kid, but I *really* started listening to it in, like, 2005, 2004. I got into Def Leppard and the eighties stuff. Before then I was a metalhead, listening more to power metal. Stuff like the early Hammerfall albums, Helloween, Stratovarius… The influence is there on *H.e.a.t II*. If you listen to *Victory*, for example, that could easily be a power-metal song if you added some bass drums and more high-pitched screams.



Erik Grönwall (right) passing the mic back to Kenny Leckremo

For a lot of listeners H.e.a.t's music harks back to a simpler time. What does it do for you?
We never experienced the eighties – I was about two when *Hysteria* came out. But we have experienced the music and videos from it. [For us] it was a nostalgic: "Ooh, I wish I was there", kind of thing. So we started to take matters into our own hands and created the kind of music we wanted to listen to, and to make that experience we wanted.

Do you get recognised in your home country?
Eurovision in 2009 [H.e.a.t competed in Melodifestivalen, Sweden's qualifier event], that was a big thing. We had a major hit in Sweden with *1000 Miles*, and when you went to the grocery store people would be like: "Ah, you're from H.e.a.t!" But that was in our home town, Upplands Vasby. If you go to rock pubs in Stockholm people will come over and say: "Hey! What's going on with H.e.a.t?" We can walk the streets here without getting harassed – easily! But we have our crowd, the rockers.

How do you feel about rock's place in the world these days?
I think it's like a flourishing underground thing. You have this big group of cool misfits, basically, uniting under the banner of rock'n'roll. It's cool. I think that's how it started; rock'n'roll was music for the kids, or for the workers even, the working class. I think it's kind of back to that now.

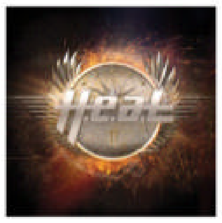
Pandemic-permitting, what does 2021 hold for you guys?
We'll be working on a new album next year, and we have a lot of tour dates booked. We're going to Australia in May for the first time… I don't want to jinx anything though.

H.E.A.T: GUSTAF SANDHOLM ANDERSSON/PRESS

9 THE STRUTS
Strange Days INTERSCOPE

If any album title sums up this shocker of a year, it's this one. For the follow-up to their reputation-sealing *Young And Dangerous*, the British glam rockers got together in producer Jon Levine's LA studio for 10 days during lockdown. *Strange Days* (which made UK No.11 in October) brings their trademark big choruses, old-school hooks and cheeky winks to camera, but the recording conditions have imbued the fist-pumping anthems with almost a raw spirit. There's more 70s-era Stones here than The Darkness, Kiss cover *Do You Love Me* suits them well, and the guests – Robbie Williams, Joe Elliott, Phil Collen, Tom Morello and Albert Hammond Jr – prove just how all-embracing The Struts' swaggering attitude really is. **GM**
Killer track: *Burn It Down*

8 H.E.A.T
H.e.a.t II FRONTIERS



Swedish melodic rock bombshells H.e.a.t may ultimately fail in their decade-long mission to win over the hearts and ears of an AOR-averse public, but that hasn't dented their determination. *'We will go on drawing blood from a stone'*, vocalist Erik Grönwall sings on the euphoric *One By One*, like the past 30 years never happened. *'Soon they all will sing the song'*.

Such enthusiasm is infectious, but it would amount to nothing if H.e.a.t didn't have the tunes to back it up. *Nothing To Say*, for example, is a 21st-century power ballad so brilliantly primped and glossy it puts most Crufts finalists to shame.

Did *H.e.a.t II* bring hard rock's good times back in 2020? No. But it had a helluva good time trying. **DE**
Killer track: *Adrenaline*

7 PEARL JAM
Gigaton MONKEYWRENCH/REPUBLIC

With a titular payload equivalent to one billion tons of TNT, *Gigaton* shook the foundations of the modern rock world in 2020. Pearl Jam have survived and thrived with virtually the same line-up as when they started in the shadow of Nirvana 30 years ago, and that long, often troubled lineage lends authority to songs that cast a penetrating look at the cultural war zone of contemporary America. *'This fucked-up situation calls for all hands on deck'*, Eddie Vedder sings in *Seven O'Clock*, a sign-of-the-times rocker with a Springsteen-esque sense of heroic solidarity. Their musical palette is full and varied – from the punk-rock snarl of *Never Destination* to the gradually building melodrama of *Retrograde*. *'I won't give up on satisfaction,'* Vedder vows. He's as good as his word, and *Gigaton* is as good as it gets. **DS**
Killer track: *Quick Escape*

Pearl Jam

TOP 5 COUNTRY ALBUMS
Words: **Rob Hughes**

1 LUCINDA WILLIAMS
Good Souls, Better Angels
HIGHWAY 20 / THIRTY TIGERS

Lucinda Williams only seems to improve with age. The 63-year-old's follow-up proper to 2016's terrific *The Ghosts Of Highway 20* was no less impressive than that album, driven by an intensity that never lets up. The songs veered from withering social and political critique to candid autobiography, set to primal electric blues, country and splenetic rock.

2 ELIZABETH COOK
Aftermath
AGENT LOVE/THIRTY TIGERS

3 STURGILL SIMPSON
Cutting Grass Vol.1 – The Butcher Shoppe Sessions
HIGH TOP MOUNTAIN

4 JERRY JOSEPH
The Beautiful Madness DÉCOR

5 LILLY HIATT
Walking Proof NEW WEST

Nick Mason

6 NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS
Live At The Roundhouse SONY

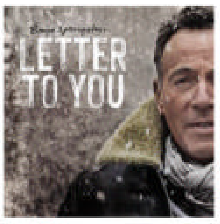
If ever there was a gig that needed to be documented for posterity, it was this extraordinary performance of Syd Barrett-era and pre-*The Dark Side Of The Moon* Pink Floyd material by original drummer Nick Mason teamed up with a supergroup that few realised could ever be quite so super. Comprised of latter-period Floyd live bassist Guy Pratt, former Blockheads guitarist Lee Harris, Spandau Ballet's Gary Kemp on guitar and vocals and The Orb's Dom Beken on keyboards, Mason's band impressively duplicate Floyd's '67 psych chartbusters (*Arnold Layne, See Emily Play*) and *Meddle* favourites (*One Of These Days/Fearless*), and intensifying proceedings with a truly inspired line in intuitive improvisation (*Interstellar Overdrive*). A large part of the Roundhouse show's magic comes from the audience's joyous reaction to a dream set-list of material that until this band came together a couple of years ago few imagined would ever emerge from immense shadows cast by *The Dark Side Of The Moon, Wish You Were Here* and *The Wall*. **IF**
Killer track: *Astronomy Domine*

NICK MASON: PATRICK BALLS/PRESS; PEARL JAM: DANNY CLINCH/PRESS

Bruce Springsteen

5 BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

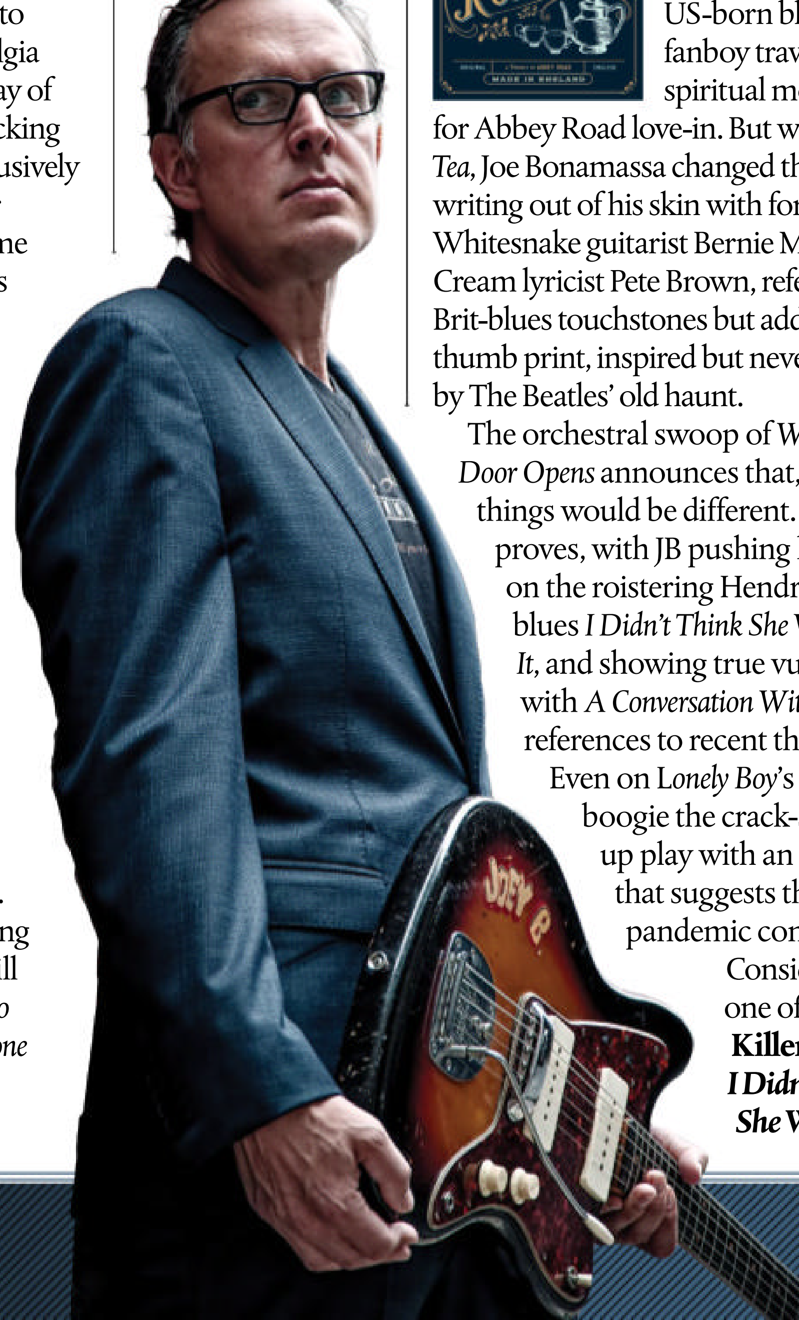
Letter To You COLUMBIA



If you thought *Western Stars*, last year's expansive string-drenched foray into West Coast nostalgia was The Boss's way of telling us he'd moved on from shitkicking rock'n'roll, *Letter To You* proved conclusively otherwise. Kicking out the jams over a four-day stint in his New Jersey home studio, Bruce and his E Street buddies recorded live and ripped through a dozen tracks. Three songs might predate the singer's debut album – *If I Was The Priest, Janey Needs A Shooter* and *Song for Orphans* – but you'd never know, as every one is beholden to that indefinable E Street/Springsteen alchemy that renders them timeless.

It's a record that is by turns nostalgic, yearning, sometimes angry, and the best damn thing he's done since *The Rising*. Springsteen skillfully wrestles with the his past, and the passing of both friends and time, while still looking to the future. These are songs that deserve to be sung together at gigs, so let's hope 2021 will allow us. '*Count the band in then kick into overdrive, by the end of the set we leave no one alive.*' Damn straight. **SL**

Killer track: *Ghosts*



Joe Bonamassa

4 JOE BONAMASSA

Royal Tea PROVOGUE/MASCOT

In lesser hands it might have smacked of a vanity project: US-born blues-boom fanboy travels to the spiritual motherland for Abbey Road love-in. But with *Royal Tea*, Joe Bonamassa changed the narrative, writing out of his skin with former Whitesnake guitarist Bernie Marsden and Cream lyricist Pete Brown, referencing the Brit-blues touchstones but adding his thumb print, inspired but never overawed by The Beatles' old haunt.

The orchestral swoop of *When One Door Opens* announces that, this time, things would be different. And so it proves, with JB pushing his songcraft on the roistering Hendrixian psych-blues *I Didn't Think She Would Do It*, and showing true vulnerability with *A Conversation With Alice's* references to recent therapy.

Even on *Lonely Boy*'s traditional boogie the crack-squad line-up play with an urgency that suggests they saw the pandemic coming.

Consider yourself one of us, JB. **HY**

Killer track: *I Didn't Think She Would Do It*

3 DEEP PURPLE

Whoosh! EARMUSIC

This third successive Deep Purple album recorded with production visionary Bob Ezrin at the desk captures a band on a roll and, perhaps astonishingly, given how long they've been around, still delivering some of the most compelling, considered and concise compositions of their entire extensive career.

Sub-four-minute, ideas-packed mini-epics (of the kind Ezrin once facilitated with Alice Cooper) proliferate, and Ian Gillan's vocal and lyric-writing skills retain their scalpel sharpness, while both individual and ensemble instrumental performances are reliably exemplary. Purple's sole surviving original member, drummer Ian Paice, grooves with a tight-but-loose precision, keyboard player Don Airey's broad palette creates distinct soundscapes, and guitarist Steve Morse's astounding fingerboard fluency and fluidity simply dazzles.

Today's Purple are as technically brilliant a combo as they've ever been, but the sum of their individual parts seems greater than ever before. No one is individually showboating on *Whoosh!*, they're just performing out of their collective skin. **IF**

Killer track: *No Need To Shout*

2 FISH

Weltschmerz

CHOCOLATE FROG

Prog's great warrior-poet called last orders on his music career with what has turned out to be the finest solo album of his life, and one that stands shoulder to shoulder with anything he recorded with Marillion all those decades ago.

Seven years in the making and plagued by the kind of tribulations that would have felled less stubborn souls – major surgery, near-death experiences, depression, family bereavements, broken relationships, a global pandemic – that *Weltschmerz* emerged at all is a small miracle. Not for nothing does its title roughly translate as 'the pain of the world'.

And there's plenty of pain of the literal and metaphorical kind here, from *The Grace Of God*'s vivid depiction of a hospital patient facing a life-or-death operation, to *Garden Of Remembrance*'s close-to-home portrait of personal loss. There's anger and defiance too, not least on the closing title track – a call-back to Marillion's rabble-rousing 1982 debut single *Market Square Heroes*, and a song that squares the circle on Fish's career. Farewells rarely come any finer than this. **DE**

Killer track: *Weltschmerz*

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN: ROB DEMARTIN/PRESS. JOE BONAMASSA: JIM HERRINGTON/PRESS

1

AC/DC

Power Up

COLUMBIA

The name of the album, like the name of the band, speaks volumes. As Angus Young told *Classic Rock*: "I've always felt when I was plugging in my guitar that I was plugging into a big electrical grid."

To that end, *Power Up* felt just right. And although the album's opening salvo, *Realize*, has an atypical title for an AC/DC song, it delivers a jolt of charge in no uncertain fashion: the riff bucking and kicking like a mule, Brian Johnson's voice at fever pitch, a stinging solo from Angus and a gang vocal '*Ah ah ah ah ah!*' harking back to *Thunderstruck*. It's AC/DC doing what they've always done: high-voltage rock'n'roll.

When Angus's big brother Malcolm was asked in 2003 why every AC/DC album sounded the same, he replied, with a wry smile: "Same band!" Even now, three years after Malcolm's passing, that simple logic still applies.

This band will never be quite the same without Malcolm around. It was his steely focus that drove them on from the spit-and-sawdust pubs of Australia to the world's biggest stages; his no-nonsense approach to rhythm guitar that gave the band's music its irresistible force and momentum. But when Angus says that he still feels Mal's presence, that's more than just sentimentality.

The 12 songs on *Power Up* are all based on riffs that the two of them had worked on together, in the years before dementia got the better of Malcolm. And as with the band's previous album, *Rock Or Bust*, released in 2014 when Malcolm was still alive, the brothers' nephew Stevie Young plays rhythm guitar with a similar weight and feel.

In addition, the return to the line-up of Brian Johnson, bassist Cliff Williams and drummer Phil Rudd, all of whom had left at various points after the recording of

Rock Or Bust, has ensured that *Power Up* sounds exactly as it should, with Johnson's filthy voice so full of character, and that rhythm section, the best that AC/DC have ever had, locked in tight and deep in the pocket.

And so, 40 years after *Back In Black*, with all but Malcolm still standing from that game changer, there's little that is new on the new AC/DC album. And that's just fine. There is a hint of something deeper in another song with an atypical title, *Through The Mists Of Time*, of which Brian said to *Classic Rock*: "Every time I listen to it I get goosebumps, thinking of Malcolm." The words in this song, written by Angus, are not specific, but there's a little more subtlety in the way Brian sings it, a lightness of touch in a rolling melodic riff. But in every other song they come out swinging, and swinging hard.

As Angus once said: "You don't go to the butcher for brain surgery." This lack of finesse has served AC/DC well across 16 studio albums, and so it is with the seventeenth. The tone set with *Realize* is repeated time and again in bruising, route-one tracks such as *Rejection*, *Wild Reputation* and the single *Shot In The Dark*. One slow and moody one, *No Man's Land*, has an air of menace similar to that of *Badlands* from *Flick Of The Switch*, the most underrated of all AC/DC albums. And in *Demon Fire*, begun with Brian growling like the bad motherfucker that he isn't – not really – a frenetic riff harks back to *Let There Be Rock* and, further back, to the Chuck Berry songs that first made Angus and Malcolm want to be rock'n'roll stars.

"This one's for Mal," Angus says, just as *Back In Black* was for Bon Scott all those years ago. *Power Up* delivers on the promise of its title. AC/DC ride on. **PE**

Killer track: *Realize*

JOSH CHEUSE

DANGER: HIGH VOLTAGE

It looked like it was all over for **AC/DC** after their last tour. But the best hard rock'n'roll band in the world don't quit that easily. And back they've come, with the best album of 2020: *Power Up*.

Words: **Paul Elliott**

AC/DC's new album *Power Up* is dedicated to the late Malcolm Young, the band's former guitarist, and comprises 12 tracks that he wrote years ago with his guitarist brother Angus. The album also marks the return to the band of singer Brian Johnson, bassist Cliff Williams and drummer Phil Rudd, while Stevie Young, Angus's nephew, continues as rhythm guitarist in place of Malcolm. *Power Up* is the biggest album of 2020, and here Angus and Brian explain how it happened.

2020 has been a tough year for everyone, but a new AC/DC album has put a smile on a lot of faces.
Brian: I hope so. It has been a hard time, but everybody has had to go through this thing together.
Angus: We'd have liked to get it out earlier – we were plugged in and ready to go. But in the end it's come out really well.

It's also by the line-up of the band that the fans wanted. Is that how you see it too?
Angus: Yeah, with Stevie filling in for Malcolm, it's what we wanted. And really it just kind of evolved. I was putting together ideas and tracks and everything, so I had to wait till that was done. Then we talked to each other and got together and worked out that everyone was happy to be on board. That's basically it.

Cliff had retired, and Phil had been out of the band for a few years after some well-publicised 'legal difficulties'.
Angus: Cliff said right away that he wanted to do this. He wanted to be involved again. And with Phil, he did some work on himself, continued with that, and got himself all together.
Brian (who left the band on medical grounds in 2001): Aye, it was awful. My doctor had said: "If you carry on singing you'll end up stone deaf."

But now, thanks to a new miracle cure, you're back in the ring to take another swing.
Brian: It's great. This wonderful man from Colorado invented this new treatment. And I couldn't believe how good it was.
Angus: Before we did the album, Brian also did a bit of prep work, trying beforehand to see how he was doing. He's done quite a few stages of testing.

> **"As soon as I'm finished with an album, I start looking for the next song."**
> Angus Young

With all the songs that you'd already written with Malcolm, how did you decide which ones to use for *Power Up*?
Angus: There was a lot of stuff that Mal and me had worked on. Some were just rough ideas. So I spent a lot of time going through it, and then it was just a case of, hey, I've got enough good stuff.

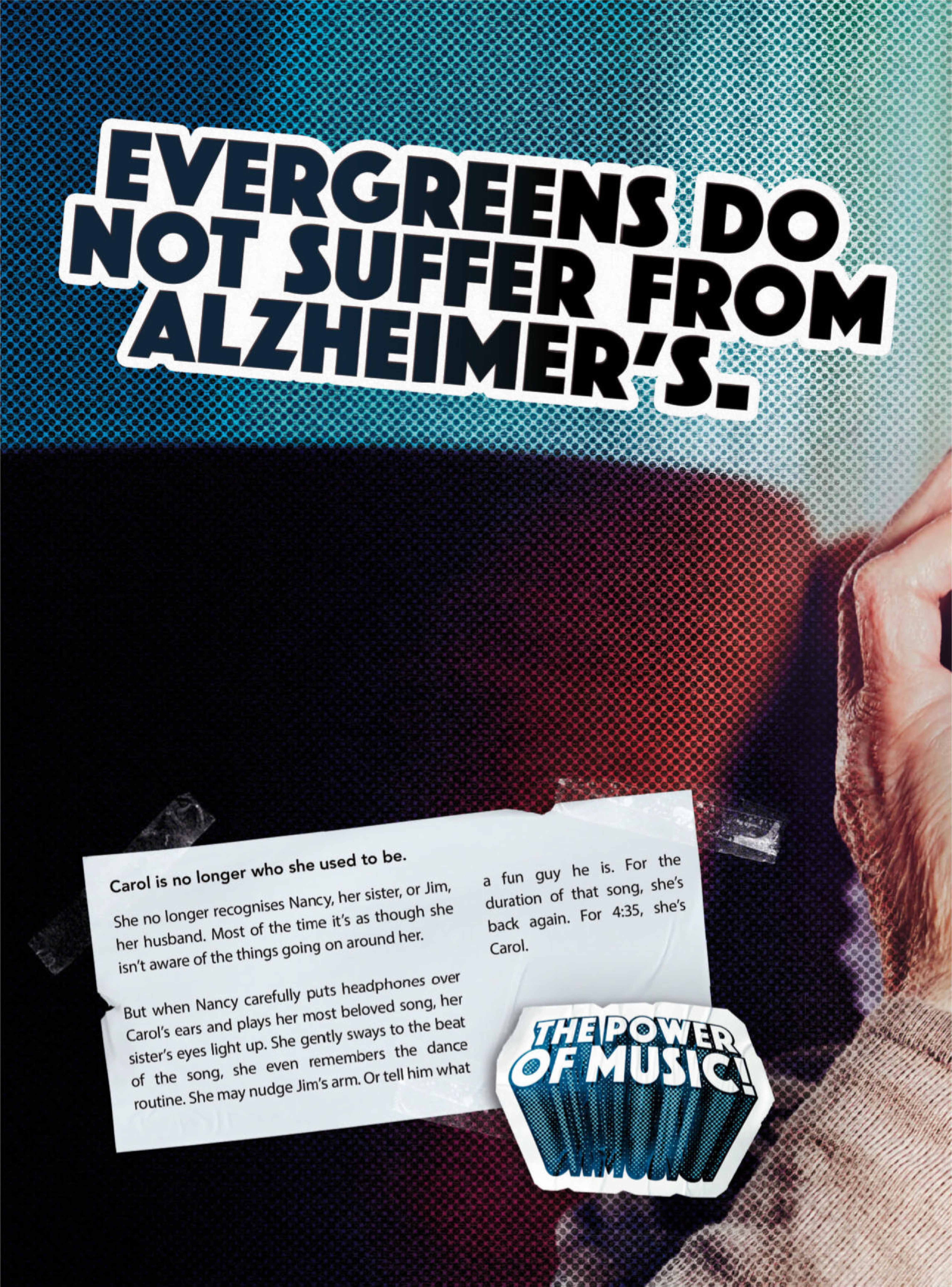
Were you still writing bits and pieces of songs while you were in the studio?
Angus: Kind of. We still work up to the wire. Always have done. And sometimes while we're doing the backing tracks we might change something here and there. If we needed something more, we'd call Brian in from the next room to get a little vocal thing together so you can hear how the song is working out.

As with every AC/DC album, there are some great riffs on this one – in songs such as *Realize* and *Shot In The Dark*. But do you ever find that what you think is a great new riff is actually one that you did thirty or forty years ago?
Angus: What, I liked it so much I did it twice? That's one way of looking at it, I guess! Sometimes, when I'm just doing something by myself, I'll doodle away, and I might experiment a bit. I'll play about with different ideas, look around for different sounds and other stuff. But usually I do that for half an hour or so, and then I go: "Right, I got that out of my system." Then I get straight back into what I know.

Do you each have a favourite track on the album?
Brian: No! Don't ask me that. It's like trying to pick your favourite Beatles song. It ain't gonna happen. And if I pick one I'll only change my mind tomorrow. The first thing I said to Angus when I got a copy of the album was: "Jeez, I do not envy the man who's got to pick a single from this lot." And I really meant it.
Angus: I really like the opening track a lot, *Realize*. But I like them all – *Rejection, Shot In The Dark, Wild Reputation, Demon's Fire*… and *Money Shot* is a big song. I'm a bit biased, you know? Ha ha.

You've also said that you're not thinking that this is AC/DC's last album.
Angus: Yeah. I mean, who knows? But I can tell you, there's still plenty of ideas and stuff. As soon as I'm finished with an album, I start looking for the next song.

ASHLEY MAILE/ICONICPIX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STRANGER DAYS

Clouds and silver linings… No one wanted a pandemic to come along and tip 2020 on its head. But without the lockdown we were forced into as a result, **The Struts**' new album would not exist.

Words: **Polly Glass**

The sun is setting in Los Angeles one evening in early May. The Struts have just finished making their new album – effectively from scratch, in just 10 days – and Luke Spiller is motorbiking out to Joshua Tree National Park.

"I remember riding and thinking: 'Oh my god'," the singer says. "I literally couldn't fathom the amount of work and material that had been accumulated and recorded to such a high standard. It was kind of mind-blowing. But it all sunk in on that ride. This feeling of: 'Ahhh, *this* is what it's all about.' I was riding on an empty highway, with just some music on my airpods. It was a real moment of: 'Wow, I can't wait for people to hear this.' I'll always remember that."

This is a very Luke Spiller anecdote. The motorbike, the music, the evocative snapshot of nostalgic Hollywood roguishness… Musically he flits between eras, but visually the 32-year-old embodies the sort of offbeat, old-world decadence seen in very few of his contemporaries. He's sort of like a male Norma Desmond for the iPhone generation, with one eye on Queen's deep cuts and the other on Noel Fielding's hairdresser (and less prone to diva fits).

Completed by guitarist/riff machine Adam Slack, pop-star-pretty bassist Jed Elliott and powerhouse drummer Gethin Davies, The Struts are one of the main reasons we can all feel good about the state of rock'n'roll today. Capitalising on their Britishness without veering into twee territory (the accentless vocals, the self-aware lyrics, the nods to Queen, Mott The Hoople, Oasis etc), in the past few years they've torn through the United States, filled increasingly sizeable UK venues and set their sights on the music's Holy Grail – major radio play and world domination. Nothing could stop them.

> **"We did go in saying: 'F**k radio, f**k everything, this record is going to be purely for the fans.'"**
>
> **Luke Spiller**

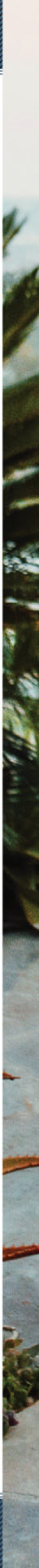
But of course a lot can change in a year. As of now, Spiller is "officially homeless" and is hunkering down at his parents' place in the UK while all hell breaks loose in America. His bandmates are in similar a position, having left their Tinseltown digs and flown back to Blighty in the run-up to the release day of the new album, *Strange Days*, only to find themselves unable to return to the US.

"We did set up homes in LA, and now we're kind of in the process of getting rid of it, and just…" Guitarist Slack searches for the words. "I dunno, surviving until we have a better idea of where and when we're going to be working again, or where we're going to be living. We're in that limbo phase."

This was not how 2020 was supposed to look. "It was going to be business as usual," Spiller says over Zoom, sitting in his old bedroom. "There was going to be a lot of touring, a lot of promotion, writing here and there, like what we've done before on the previous albums."

For the past five years, "business as usual" for The Struts has meant relentless touring and promo schedules, with writing and recording sessions squeezed in between flights, shoots and shows. It's reaped some brilliant results. Last year's *Young & Dangerous* was a tight feast of pop sensibilities, gleaming contemporary production, and enough sparkle to make the *Strictly Come Dancing* cast look positively beige. Its predecessor *Everybody Wants* was similarly sugared up (but substantial), conceived in multiple stages and time zones.

None of this is to say that *Strange Days* is a sombre affair by contrast. It's certainly not a depressing 'covid fest' either, as one may be tempted to deduce from its title. Written and recorded in 10 days, it's exactly the young-firebrand rock'n'roll record that 2020 needed. It's also the band's most old-school collection yet, drawing Stones-esque toe tappers (*Cool*) the glitziest of glam (*I Hate How Much I Want You*, featuring Def Leppard's Joe Elliott and Phil Collen), Rod Stewart-via-Laurel Canyon warmth (*Burn It Down*) and more into one loose, liberated whole. You can hear that the band were not ▷



BETH SARAVO/PRESS

Strutting their star-spangled-new-album stuff: (l-r) Gethin Davies, Jed Elliott, Luke Spiller, Adam Slack.

under pressure – from themselves or anyone else – to make radio singles.

Ironically it's their highest charting record by a long shot, landing in the UK Top 20 at No.11, and it saw them finally nail some heavyweight UK airtime, with multiple spins on Radio 2.

"We did go in saying: 'Fuck radio, fuck everything, this is going to be purely for the fans,'" Spiller says, "and ultimately it could prove to be one of our most successful records to date. Because radio is really important. And anyone who says it's not is talking out of their arse."

"It's a pretty happy album," Slack says. "*Strange Days* [the title track, co-sung with Robbie Williams] is ballad-y but it's hopeful. And a lot of the songs, like *Can't Sleep, Cool, Hate How Much I Want You*, even *Burn it Down*, they're all uplifting songs, which is nice in the fact that it has been a bit of a crappy year."

He's not wrong. 2020 has brought plenty of unwelcome surprises. Still, the band agree, without the biggest of them *Strange Days* wouldn't exist.

"If the lockdown and this massive pandemic hadn't have happened, then this record simply wouldn't have happened," Spiller says with finality. "Talk about making the best out of a bad situation."

Back in March, as much of the world migrated over to Zoom and set up camp there, The Struts were doing their best to stay sane by playing around with ideas and performing eclectic 'Sunday Services' on YouTube (lockdown banter and Spice Girls covers included). Initially the prospect of some home time, after five years of barely sitting still, was enticing. They embraced cosy domesticity. Elliott and Slack went one step further and got puppies with their respective girlfriends.

"We just got a glimpse of what a normal life would be like," Elliott says. "Whether or not

GUEST STAR I: ROBBIE WILLIAMS

The Take That boy and solo megastar tells us about singing on the title track of The Struts' new album.

"I've been a fan of The Struts and admired them for a long time. We've been in touch for a while, and I appeared on their podcast. Luke and I stayed in touch and it just became a really natural collaboration. [*Strange Days*] is an incredible song and I feel blessed to be involved. The Struts are so incredibly talented – Luke has an amazing voice. These are strange days, and this is an anthem for these strange times.

"Both the song and the video were shot using the covid guidelines, and I think the video is a great piece of art. It wasn't so much a challenge, just a different and new way of working."

BETH SARAVO/PRESS

puppies [which are still in LA] were a good idea, in hindsight I'm not sure."

By the time the idea of recording was mooted – and it was suggested that the band quarantine together for 10 days at producer Jon Levine's home studio – they were falling out of love with 'normal' living.

"We were kind of all going a bit mad," Davies admits, "and that was, like, two weeks into it, I think. We were all craving it for a while, but then it was like: 'Oh, actually this is kind of mundane.' It fizzled out after a while. It made me appreciate what we do a lot more."

Initial noises about making an EP turned into a general oh-fuck-it-let's-make-an-album consensus, and on April 24 2020 (covid-tested and virus-free) the four of them arrived at Levine's LA residence.

Scenes of rampant debauchery, obscenity, excess… No, actually a lot of pyjamas, empty Starbucks cups and sleeping on air mattresses. Passers-by (had they been allowed in) would have witnessed something akin to a big sleep-over or summer camp, pandemic-style. Songs were written and recorded round the clock, broken up by one restorative day of drinking beers by the pool when emotions began to run a little high.

For the four friends, who'd never made a record together in such a concentrated block of time, it was complete bliss. Talking to them today, all the headaches and weariness generated by the global situation seem to evaporate as conversation turns to those 10 days.

"I've never been so excited to be writing music, ever," enthuses Slack, who'd been storing up riffs and ideas in the preceding weeks. "Every morning I was just so excited, and it made me love songwriting even more than I ever had. I hadn't had that feeling for years, probably going all the way back to when me and Luke first started writing. You're going into this room and thinking: 'I wonder what's going to happen today? We wrote three yesterday! Are we gonna write another three today?'"

"We were literally writing rock'n'roll for breakfast, every day for ten days," Spiller says. "It felt like a dream. I don't know whether it was the fact that I was waking up so early and we were having long days, or maybe it was the particular strain of weed I was smoking, but it literally felt like a dream. We were making two to three songs sometimes in one day. Not only that, but they were really good!"

The real breakthrough, they agree, came when it came to writing and nailing the deliciously strutting, 60s-nodding *Cool*, from scratch, in less than a day.

"I think the chains had been broken at that point," Slack says. "'Oh we can *literally* do whatever we want.' That sparked the rest of the writing process, really. It was a really 'cool' moment. Pun intended."

So you didn't go all *Lord Of The Flies* or anything while you were locked down in the studio?

"We're the only band in the entire world that could have Robbie Williams and Tom Morello on the same album."

Luke Spiller

"Well, we were fighting over a giant conch shell at one point…" Spiller replies thoughtfully, "but that's about as *Lord Of The Flies* as it got."

"The bass part on *Wild Child* is actually Geth through a conch," Elliott adds.

"It's our secret," Spiller says with a grin. "Our new sound."

"Our not so guilty conch!" a beaming Elliott adds.

"Oh God…" Slack puts his head in his hands.

Outsider infiltration came from perhaps the most successfully eclectic guest cast since Slash's self-titled solo debut. For the balladic title track Spiller went to Robbie Williams's Beverly Hills home, where the two of them recorded vocals on the ex-Take That star's front porch. Tom Morello, an old friend from a Nashville club gig, flew in guitar parts for the brilliantly heavy *Wild Child* ("It was *loud*," Spiller remembers. "I don't know why the neighbours didn't complain"). Strokes guitarist Albert Hammond Jr (he'd supported them as a soloist) lent chops to *Another Hit Of Showmanship* for a shot of 00s guitar-wave nostalgia. Joe Elliott's mock phone call/opening skit for *I Hate How Much I Want You* was recorded in two takes in May ("I said: 'Just… be as *you* as you possibly can,'" Spiller says, chuckling).

"We're the only band in the entire world that could have Robbie Williams and Tom Morello on the same album," Spiller says with unshakeable confidence. "Hands-down, no one else would do that. We're the only band who's ever opened up for McFly for a tour and then done the Rolling Stones. This is the kind of band we are."

It's come at price, though – chiefly that of their personal lives. Relationships have suffered or fallen apart. Prolonged time at home (not that any of them had fixed 'homes' for a long while), pre-covid, was non-existent. Exhaustion got very real.

None of them are complaining about any of this, but you wonder if the enforced time off the road and tastes of 'normal' life have made them look at the business of being in a band differently? Or simply reinforced what we've long sensed: that it's what they were made to do?

"It does make you sort of sit back and ask yourself: 'What actually is important here? What do I want to get out of this experience called life?'" Spiller concedes. "Because being and doing who and what we are, it's not *normal*. I don't think we're designed to live like this for extensive periods of time. So I think it's kind of made our priorities shift slightly." He pauses, then adds swiftly: "But it's not taken away our ambition."

"It [being at home] was kind of a nice, welcome change," Slack says, but…" He stops and thinks, tired but wired to the cause. "I'm kind of itching to go and play shows."

World domination? It's never off the table.

Strange Days is out now via Interscope/Polydor.

DEF LEPPARD: ROSS HALFIN/PRESS

GUEST STAR 2:
DEF LEPPARD

Joe Elliott and Phil Collen on the glam and glory of The Struts' *Strange Days* album.

Phil Collen: It's got a very British flair and flavour to it. You can absolutely tell that [they're] a British band, and I think that's really cool in this day and age. A lot of the times we've been mistaken for an American band. We grew up listening to American music, hence the American accent. But I think [The Struts] had longer to ingest, digest and take all this other stuff in, and you can actually hear it on their stuff.
Joe Elliott: There's an atmosphere to it. I can hear that it [*Strange Days*] was made so quickly and with so much bottled-up energy. It's got that snowball, can't-stop-it-once-it's-rolling-down-a-hill factor. And you've got so much eclectic direction going on, but all within the bubble of The Struts. And the great thing is it's not overdone, it's not all 'virus virus virus'. There is a kind of claustrophobia to it, which is a good thing, but there's something for everyone.
PC: And a saxophone solo!
JE: The skit at the beginning [of *I Hate How Much I Want You*, which he did] sets the tone. Such a great song. When I first heard it I thought: 'This is brilliant, I just love it.' This is one of the most glam things on the record, so it totally reminds me of watching *Top Of The Pops* in 1973, and it's like: 'Why would I not wanna be on this song?' And the lyrics are so fun. The chorus is awesome. The chorus reminds me of Slade, Sweet, all those big what we used to call 'football terrace' choruses. And nobody's written a song like that in decades. An absolute joy to be part of it.
PC: *Cool* reminds me of The Pretty Things in the sixties. They had these great songs, and *Cool* kind of reminds me of them, especially the verses; it has the sixties thing about it, but done in a modern way.

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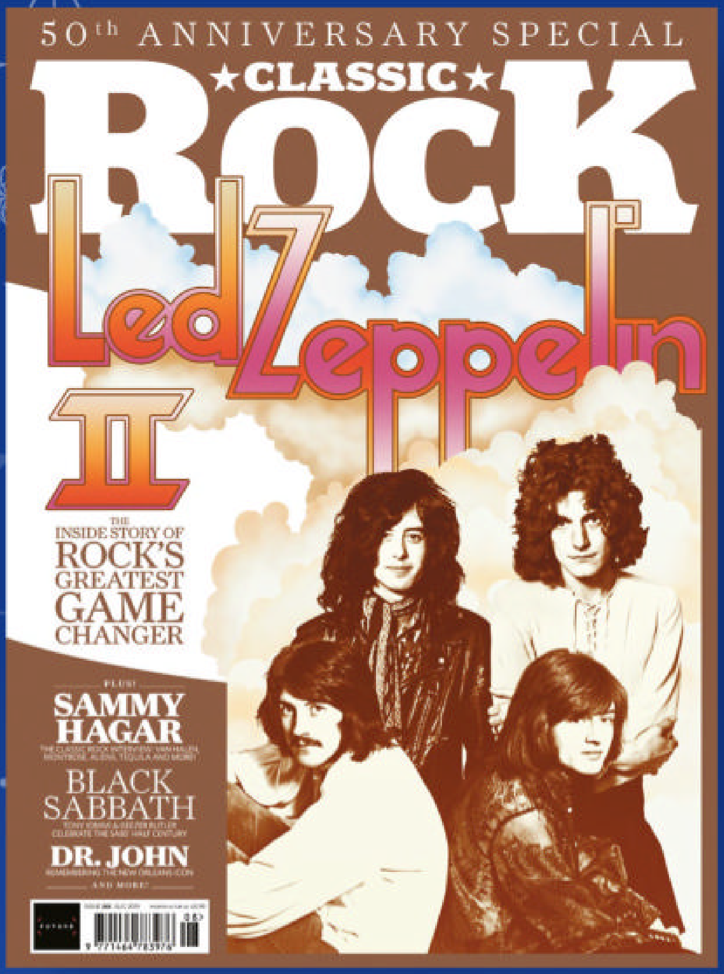

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2020
THE YEAR IN ROCK

"THERE CAN COME A STRANGE BEAUTY OUT OF IT ALL"

After spending the last four decades immersed in music, **Fish** is calling time. But with his farewell album, the prog legend is signing off with the best record of his solo career.

Words: **Mick Wall** Portrait: **Stuart Wood**

Illness, old age, death, war. They don't sound like the most promising ingredients for making what turned out to be one of the most uplifting albums of the year. But that's what Fish has done on his new – and, he says, final ever – album, *Weltschmerz* (literal translation from German: 'world pain', generally: world-weary).

There's a lot to unpack here but let's start with the concept behind *Weltschmerz*. Ostensibly a double album – two CDs comprising 10 tracks, totalling around 84 minutes of music – the idea took hold in the aftermath of the death of Fish's father, Robert, in 2016.

"You can prepare for somebody close to you dying. You know they're going to go, and you mentally build all the walls to deal with this emotion that you know is going to come at you. Then it happened and it struck me in a completely different way to what I expected. I just focused, blocked everything off. Then when the funeral was over I locked myself in the garden for, like, seven months, just doing nothing. I couldn't write. Couldn't do anything. I didn't get the first thing written on paper until the end of 2017. That was *Little Man What Now?*."

Talking via Skype from his countryside home outside Edinburgh where he's lived for 30 years, Fish goes on to explain how his father's death was followed soon after by his own multiplying health problems: operations in 2017 on his spine and, separately, his shoulder, have been followed more recently with operations on his heart and his hands, and a near-death experience with sepsis (caused by the body's response to an infection).

"That was all within the tail of the comet of my father's death. I was in and out of hospital all the time. I was just aware that I was getting old. I turned sixty in April 2018 and I thought: 'It's time to go.'"

Other factors that contributed to Fish's growing sense of mortality included the decision to put the album release back for a year while Mark Wilkinson recovered from cancer. "Mark has designed every album I've ever done from [Marillion's] *Script For A Jester's Tear* right through my entire solo career. I wasn't making a final album without him."

Throw in the continuing fallout from Brexit, the shock and awe of Trump, and now the whole world forced to the precipice of destruction by a global pandemic…

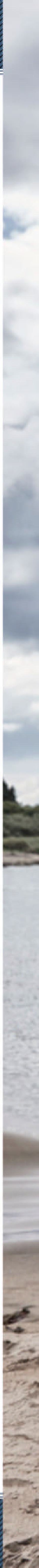
"I think I've always been in tune looking at the world around me. If you listen to the lyrics of *Vigil In A Wilderness Of Mirrors*, it's just as relevant to now. It's strange, but I've always had that. Maybe when *Kayleigh* came out in that summer of eighty-five. It was on the radio, and it just tuned in like some virus into people's heads. That was the 'now' song then. That's what I wanted to do with *Weltschmerz*. I wanted to take these people that were in dark and lonely places, bring them together and assure them there's a beauty in there, that there can come a strange beauty out of it all."

> **"I definitely don't want to be on the chicken-in-a-basket circuit singing f**king *Kayleigh*."**

When Fish first spoke of his intention to actually retire from music, I assumed he would eventually change his mind – especially if the 'final' album turned out to be the jewel that the startling early demos he'd played me then suggested. Instead, the fact that *Weltschmerz* is his greatest record since Marillion's towering *Clutching At Straws*, his last album with the band before abandoning them at the peak of their powers in 1987, has only reinforced his decision to make it his fond adieu.

"The reality is I don't want to be on a tour bus for the rest of my life. I'm never going to be playing stadiums or arenas again. And I definitely don't want to be on the chicken-in-a-basket circuit singing fucking *Kayleigh*. But all these operations and being aware of the mortal coil and everything else that came in, the experiences, it all just fed into the album."

You can hear that from the ghostly chattering atmosphere of opening track *Grace Of God*. Inspired by a lengthy recovery period in hospital following the second of two nasty bouts of sepsis – "I was laying there hooked up to intravenous tubes, cannulas sticking out of my wrists" – it sets the scene for what, it quickly becomes clear, is a monumental body of work. Eight minutes of slipping in and out of consciousness, music as fever dream, disembodied voices, words-sharp and precise as a needle in a syringe. It's followed by *Man With A Stick*, instrumentally the closest descendent of rock, but thematically as angrily appalled yet deeply empathetic as anything else here, a remembrance of things past that contains the bloodied sweep of the latter half 20th-century history. ▷



Colourful character: Fish in his days fronting Marillion from 1981 to '88.

It's the same with every track, the personal as political, music as first memory-muscle quickly cascading out into flows of imagination far beyond normal limits for this kind of thing. And that's before you come to the cornerstone epics like *Rose Of Damascus*, almost 16 minutes long yet impossible to turn away from. Ostensibly it's the tale of a young woman refugee fleeing the Syrian war, but you don't need a microscope to detect the more subterranean themes also attached.

"When Mark Wilkinson and I first talked about it, he said: 'You have to do this in third-person. You can't write it in first, it's going to be too heavy, too personal.' So that's what I did. Then I found out suddenly, all that third-person stuff was just completely infused with me-ness. When I started singing *Waverley Steps* in 2018 I went: 'Fucking hell, this is me.' I didn't realise. There are some of the songs on the album that are a lot more of me than I intended to put in."

Indeed, while the words – always Fish's calling card – are more acutely refined and loaded with poetic imagery than ever before, it's the astounding music, by Fish and long-time co-writer Steve Vantsis, that makes the deepest cuts run so red.

Prog fans will no doubt delight at the sheer scope of tracks like *Rose Of Damascus*, *Little Man What Now?* (10.54) and *Waverley Steps* (13.48). But they won't find any Marillion-era widdly keyboards and guitar solos. The sound on the album is daringly promiscuous: horns, strings, accordion, spoken-word passages, special effects all making for a cinematic experience.

"Calum is the man," he says of his long-time collaborator, keyboard player, producer and mixer Calum Malcolm. "Steve Vantsis has also got a co-producer credit on it because that was the way we built it – me and Steve building the songs from scratch, then Calum taking it further down the line. Calum was so flexible in the way that he dealt with our studio time. Steve and I both have our own 'personal issue' things, but the three of us found a way to absolutely merge together beautifully."

"This is the album that I always wanted to hear when I was seventeen. The album I always wanted to make as a musician."

Fish says he resisted the temptation to bring in some big-name guests, as he did on his last album. "It would have diluted the soul of the album," he says. "So all the people that are on it we already knew. Calum was over the water in Fife, Steve's down in Birmingham. Calum would be sending the mixes, and as we're listening he's messaging: 'I've got a better one coming.' He told us he never did more than five mixes of a track. But on this it was the seventh mix every time. I was fucking in tears when I first heard *Rose Of Damascus*. There were moments at the start where I seriously doubted we'd ever get it. Calum just kept saying: 'Don't worry.' And he was right."

The way *Weltschmerz* is presented also contributes to the immersive experience it delivers: CDs, DVDs featuring an interview with Fish and Mark Wilkinson, 5.1 surround versions, live tracks, new track videos… most impressive of all, the 100-page booklet-box that contains the whole caboodle. Not just all the lyrics and info, but also Fish's story of how the album came to be. As refreshingly honest as we have come to expect from the guy who has always worn his heart like two upholstered pistols in his hands, but also beautifully written. All this set off by Mark Wilkinson's gorgeous and evocative images.

"Mark did a brilliant job," Fish says. "As a final statement it's breathtaking. You can see the journey he's made from the original jester image on the first Marillion records up to this. The visual references to plants and garden life is also something I asked him to consider, because of my own affinity with my own gardens. We grow our own vegetables, fruit and of course hundreds of beautiful plants and flowers."

The whole becomes an anomaly in the digi-streaming age: a work of musical and visual art that you actually want to spend time on: to listen to, to read, to absorb, to form a meaningful relationship with. Some tracks, such as the fragile piano ballad *Garden Of Remembrance*, are so beautiful they became almost painful to listen to.

"I didn't want to go out with an absolutely duff album. I thought there's enough in me to really go for it and just make something really special. Let's put everything into one last big effort and do it and call it.

SHUTTERSTOCK

"I was running out of subject matter to write lyrics about. I've done heartbreak. I've done the futility of war and the soldier's promise. I've done the relationship stuff. I just went: 'What the fuck am I going to sing about? And where are these melodies going to come from?'

"At the same time, the world moved on, from the Syrian civil war into a full Middle Eastern crisis. We moved into dramatic climate-change issues. We moved into Trump, Brexit. We moved into so many world issues that were overwhelming. I felt fucking helpless, but I could feel it and I wanted to change it, which I think came up in the title track. But *Weltschmerz*, a pain of the world, it's become overwhelming now. I could've called the fucking thing Zeitgeist, because the feeling of the album is totally in tune with now."

Then there is the voice. The Marillion heydays when Fish sang like a cross between 70s-era Jon Anderson and Genesis-era Peter Gabriel are long gone. Now, with his mumbles, whispers and almost walking-pace vocals, he sounds more like Leonard Cohen.

He laughs. "I've always said I am a writer who can sing; I'm not a singer who can write. And my voice has changed because of what's happened to me over the years. I'll listen to *Script* or *Fugazi* now and I don't even identify with the person who sung that. It seems like it's somebody else. I had big vocal operations in 2009. I had to retrain my voice. I had to go back into the gym again with the voice. By doing that it made me examine the mechanics of songwriting. I found my real voice when I wasn't shouting over electric instruments. But it's found a really good place, because when Steve and I put the keys together, he knows that I need the ceiling, he knows that I need space to play about in."

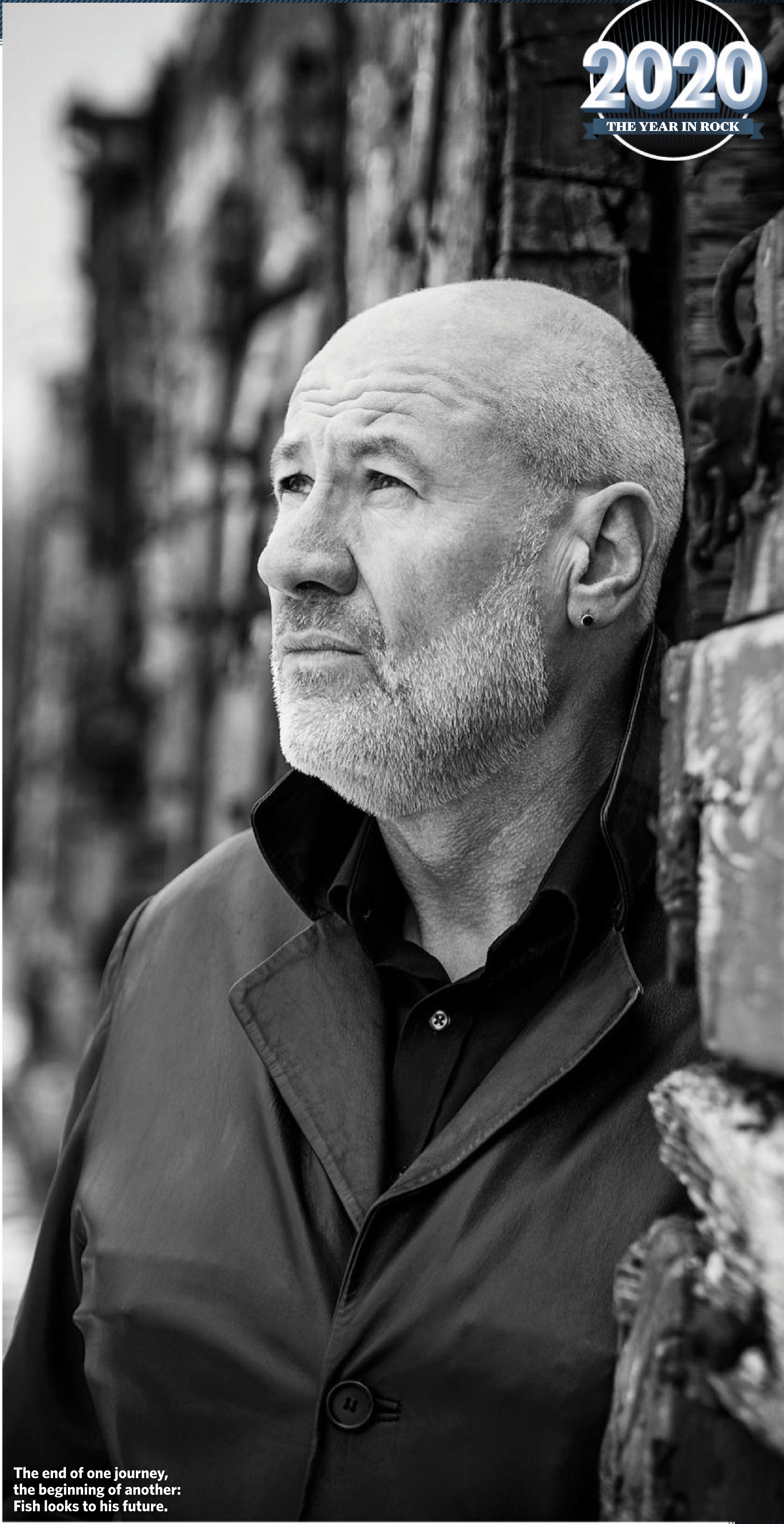
He recalls listening to the finished album for the first time, and experiencing a sort of epiphany.

"I didn't have a drink for five months, and one of the first bottles of wine that my wife and I opened, we sat on the couch and listened to the final mixes. We actually listened to it three times. I thought: 'This is fucking brilliant. I *love* listening to this.' This is the album that I always wanted to hear when I was seventeen. This is the album I always wanted to make as a musician. At the same time, it was a relief that I'd finished it. I'd done what I set out to do: to make an album of the calibre of *Weltschmerz*. And there was an added euphoria because this is the end of my recording career. This is it. There's no more songs. I am now moving into the beginning of another life."

So what does the future hold for Fish, the now ex-rock star? Does he still write songs?

"I still pick up things. There are still moments where I'm listening to the TV and somebody will say something and I'm like: 'Oh wow, that's a good idea for a song.' Or I'll hear a phrase and I'll go: 'I could use that.' But they're fleeting. They'll fizzle down. They just run by and I'm not noting them down. Because I've got other things I'm thinking about now. Screenplays. I always wanted to be an actor, but I'll never be an actor now. I might get bit parts or whatever, character roles. But I love movies. I think *Weltschmerz* is very affected by my experience in movies and why I like movies and what I like."

Fish's best material has always been cinematic. ▷



KAI R JOACHIM/PRESS

The end of one journey, the beginning of another: Fish looks to his future.

Fish at Manchester Ritz, December 2018.

"The natural step to take is to go screenplay writing. Because every one of those songs on *Weltschmerz*, you could make a short film about them or a film. I've never written a screenplay before, but in 1981, when I joined Marillion, I'd never written a song before. I don't understand music. I don't know all the technicalities. I've just got a feel for it. It's the same with movies. I've just got a feel for it, especially through words. And I've had tons of ideas for screenplays over the last twenty years.

"I was talking to a film director friend of mine. He works up in Scotland, does a lot of independent stuff. I said: 'I've got this idea.' So we sat and talked about it, and he goes: 'This is brilliant. This is a Netflix pitch!' So I've been working on that. And it's a serious fucking pitch. It's a big historical drama. Although it's so left-field it embraces so much stuff. I'm researching that at the moment. That's why I'm keeping it very close to my chest. I've got shitloads of books that I've got to go through, to find out what angle I'm going to take, how it works. Will Smith the writer is a big friend of mine. We've been talking about this for years and he's been pushing me and going, you got to get into this, you got to move into it. And that's what I want to do. I'm scared because I could fall flat on my face. But then again, fuck it. My approach has always been the same as with *Weltschmerz*. I never at any point thought: 'Are people going to like this?' I like it, this is what I want to do, that's enough. That's always been my benchmark."

It's an assertion born out of a career in which Fish achieved the most success by deliberately railing against whatever the received wisdom was at the time. Most eventfully when Fish fought for *Misplaced Childhood*, Marillion's third album, to be promoted as a concept album comprising one continuous piece of music. It was an idea so discredited in the 80s that even his staunchest supporters, including this one, thought he was out of his mind.

Result: the band's first No.1 album, first massive hit singles, first US success, first taste of the millionaire rock star lifestyle.

"*Misplaced* was significant for me not because of the commercial success, but because I had the confidence at last to express myself openly. Before, I hid with the songs. They were wordy, they were flowery and I sang them while hiding behind the face make-up. But on *Misplaced* I went: 'This is me.' That had a lot to do with that album. And on *Clutching* I followed it on, and I opened myself up even more."

"This is it. There's no more songs. I am now moving into the beginning of another life."

Do you remember the first time you went on stage without the make-up?

"Well, I didn't go on without it. I phased it out. By 1984 it went from full-face make-up to really just the eyes. Then it just became eye shadow with a couple of bits on it, and then it was gone. But it was as I grew up I became more confident. I remember meeting Paul Stanley in a club in New York and he went: 'Gene really liked your make-up, man. You've got it all copyrighted?' I went: 'No.' I never thought of it like that. It was different every night, depending on the mood.

"I'd never sung my own songs before Marillion. And I was hiding. Like: 'This is a guy called Fish. This isn't Derek. This is a guy called Fish behind a mask.' And if I fucked up I could take the make-up off and walk away and be like: 'Oh, the other guy did that. Big guy did it and walked away.'"

He still insists he has no regrets about leaving Marillion when he did – just as they were about to sign a million-pound publishing deal, on the verge of becoming big in America. But he's old enough and man enough now to regret the manner of the divorce.

He and Tammy – the girl from Berlin in the *Kayleigh* video, who he would marry and then separate from just a few years later – "were not in good shape by any stretch of the imagination. And there were drugs and alcohol around everybody, you know?" The band was being mismanaged, in his view, being kept out on the road too long because of the money.

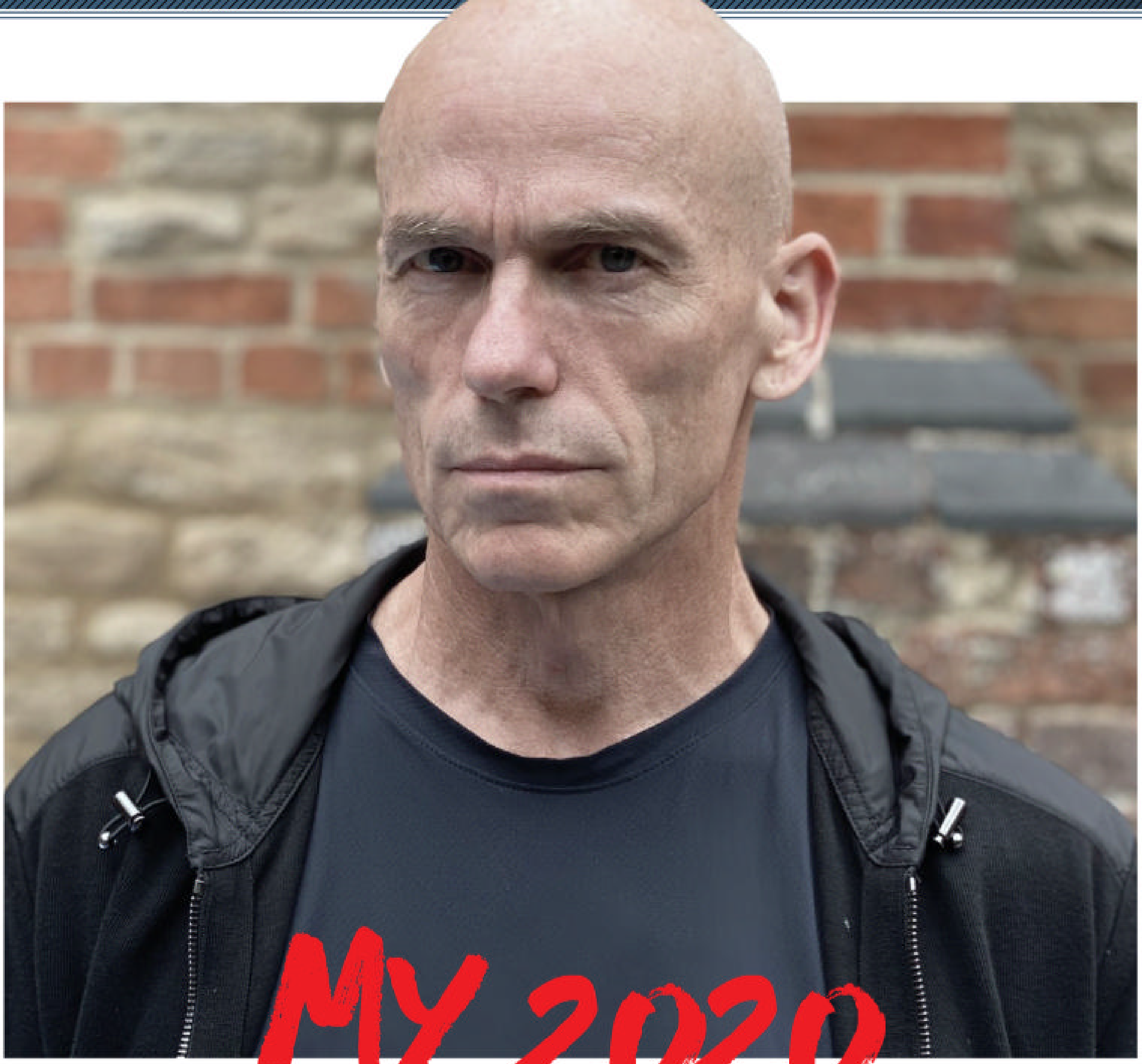
He smiles ruefully and lights another smoke.

"I was very impetuous. The me today, if I was in a situation like that, would probably have tried to talk it through. But me back then was like: 'Fuck it. I'm out!' Ultimately I really, honestly believe that I did the right thing. I've had a great life, and I'm still here and I'm happily married. I'm the singer with a studio. Christ, I'm the last person in Marillion that ever should have had a studio, right? I should have had a pub."

It would make a great movie.

Weltschmerz is available now via Chocolate Frog Recordings.

MICHAEL GRAY



My 2020 MARK KELLY

The **Marillion** keyboard player on his new record with Marathon, lockdown and former bandmate Fish's new album.

Interview: **Dave Ling**

The unexpected downtime is for musicians among the very few bonuses of lockdown. Marillion keyboard player Mark Kelly admits that without it his first ever solo project may not have come to fruition. Kelly explains why he chose to use a largely untried group of collaborators for his Marathon project, and also provides his take on the weirdest year in living memory.

The record label's biog tells us that *Mark Kelly's Marathon* has been thirty years in the making.
That's a bit of an exaggeration. During the mid-nineties I stupidly mentioned my intention to do a solo album about Dante's *Inferno*, but never got very far. In fact I sent some music to Steven Wilson with a view to collaborating, but never heard back from him. He must have thought it was rubbish. Steven reminded me about that recently.

So what is the timeline here?
The idea resurfaced about eight years ago, but again nothing really happened. Marillion always has to take precedence. A solo album is something you work on when you've nothing to do, and lockdown provided that three-month window. The one positive [of the second attempt] was that it introduced me to a lyricist called Guy Vickers. The drummer, Henry [Rogers], I knew from our band DeeExpus.

Guy wrote some fascinating lyrics for this record, especially for a novice.
Yeah. And Guy is a barrister. We met when I sought legal advice from him. He prodded me into doing this solo thing.

And Oliver M Smith is quite a vocalist.
I wanted a singer in the Peter Gabriel mould, and a friend said: "I know just the guy." Olly sings brilliantly and writes great vocal melodies, and that was it – we were off to the races. My nephew Conal Kelly plays the bass. He comes from pop music.

Who plays the superb guitar solo on *Whistling At The Sea* – Pete Wood or John Cordy?
That's John. He came into the project fairly late on as a recommendation from Steve [Rothery], who'd seen him on YouTube.

"I sent some music to Steven Wilson but never heard back."

Steve Rothery plays on the track *Puppets*, which is awash with guitar.
Steve plays the part in the main chorus and in the middle, and John plays the solo at the end which is great.

Do we hear a nod to Genesis's *Los Endos* on *Trail Of Tears*?
Oh, blimey, the lead synth part? I didn't do it consciously, but I was aware that with this album I could do things that might get frowned upon in Marillion. *Amelia* has a snippet that sounds like Rick Wakeman – and that one was intentional.

It's nice and melodic, very few complex time changes, just leisurely, confident strokes of the brush on the canvas.
I wanted it to have strong melodies, which is why I was so pleased to find Olly. It needed songs, as opposed to having just a bunch of musical passages strung together.

What's the concept behind the album?
Except that its two biggest songs [*Amelia* and *Twenty Fifty-One*] are about a breakdown in communication, there isn't one, really. A further three songs got left off. I'd like to make another album fairly soon.

How has lockdown affected you?
I don't want to sound uncaring, but we [Marillion] didn't plan to tour this year. So of all the years it could have happened to us… Well, things could have been worse.

How did you enjoy the recent Couch Convention that Marillion did?
That was fun. The fans raised 31,000 pounds to distribute to our crew.

How do you think the British politicians have handled the pandemic?
I'm sick of them all. Boris Johnson is a clown.

Have you heard Fish's latest album, *Weltschmerz*, which is also his final album?
Just a couple of tracks. There were no surprises, really. I suspect that if it does really well for him he'll do another one [laughs].

What are your personal hopes for 2021?
I would like to see the entertainment world return to some sort of normality. It would be great to go and see a couple of bands play. Maybe that'll happen in the back end of 2021.

Who are your hero and villain of 2020?
Sir David Attenborough, and Donald Trump.

When can we expect a new Marillion album?
We've been back in the studio since September. Within a few weeks we'll start checking how much of it there is, but we're in pretty good shape.

Mark Kelly's Marathon is available now via EarMusic.

SALE OF THE YEAR

While Chrissie Hynde has been involved in other projects, she's always had **The Pretenders**. And with 2020's *Hate For Sale* they returned to guitar-based rock'n'roll and came back with a bang.

Words: **Dave Steinfeld**

There's never been anyone in rock'n'roll quite like Chrissie Hynde. Of course, there were women who rocked before she arrived on the scene 40-odd years ago, such as Wanda Jackson, Heart's Wilson sisters and Patti Smith. But Hynde sort of synthesised the influences of all those women into something new, and topped it off with great songwriting chops and her distinct vocals.

Still, Hynde might baulk at the gender reference. "My role models were musicians," she tells me. "You know, my role model might have been Jeff Beck. I knew I'd never play guitar like that – but I thought I could look like him! The fact that he was a guy didn't even [factor] into it." Together with the rest of the original Pretenders – lead guitarist James Honeyman-Scott, bassist Pete Farndon and drummer Martin Chambers – Hynde made one of the best debut albums in rock history, and a second that was nearly as good.

After that, tragedy struck. Honeyman-Scott died in 1982 and Farndon followed him a year later, both drug-related deaths. Since then Hynde has soldiered on, with The Pretenders, as a solo artist and in collaboration with other musicians. Along the way she has scored the occasional hit (*Middle Of The Road, 2000 Miles, Thin Line Between Love And Hate*) and dabbled in various genres, all while remaining true to the melodic but punk-influenced rock that the band established on their debut.

Hate For Sale, released in the summer, is the eleventh proper Pretenders album and arguably their best since 1984's *Learning To Crawl*. It's also their first studio record since *Learning To Crawl* to have all four Pretenders on the cover. (In addition to Hynde and Chambers, the current line-up is completed by lead guitarist James Walbourne and bassist Nick Wilkinson.)

"I think we're at a moment now, especially with the lockdown, of getting things simple again."

Chrissie Hynde

Unlike 2016's *Alone*, *Hate For Sale* is a concise album: 10 songs with a combined running time of just over half an hour. The title track, *Turf Accountant Daddy* and *I Didn't Know When To Stop* (which is about painting) are tight, in-your-face rockers, *You Can't Hurt A Fool* and *Crying In Public* are top-notch ballads. *Didn't Want To Be This Lonely* is a rockabilly tune, *Lightning Man* is a reggae-tinged tribute to Hynde's late musician friend Richard Swift. And *Maybe Love Is In NYC* manages the neat trick of rocking out and being beautiful at the same time.

"Everything we set out to achieve on this album, I think we did," she says. "So that feels great."

When *Hate For Sale* came out, in July, the first thing that struck me was the album cover: the fact that all four Pretenders are on it. The last time that happened was with *Learning To Crawl*. It makes it look very much like a band album. What was recording it like, and what did each band member bring to the proceedings?

I really wanted to record with these guys. And I wanted to write the album with James, that's been on the cards for a long time. We actually started writing these songs a couple of years ago, but then we were on tour and were doing other things. Then we got together and finished the songs. James and I really talked about it a lot: how all throughout our last couple of tours, how we wanted to do an album with a four-piece band. You know, just simplify it. Bring in [producer] Stephen Street, who we both worked with individually before.

Martin has a very distinctive style, so he brings his personality. Same with Nick. We have a real solid… I don't know, chemistry. We have a blast ▷

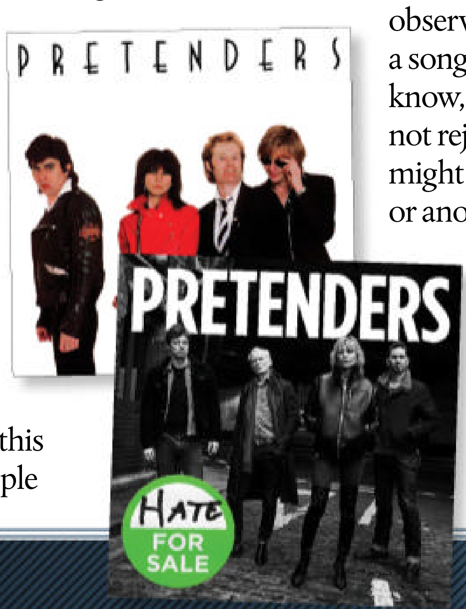
The chart-bothering original Pretenders in '79: (l-r) Pete Farndon, Chrissie Hynde, James Honeyman-Scott, Martin Chambers.

when we play live, and we really wanted to bring that into this album and make it, number one, a fun album.

What can you tell us about the title track, which is also the first one on the album.
That was one of the first songs we wrote. And we thought it was a good title. It wasn't about anyone specific, it was just more of… I suppose you could say a stereotype.

***Love Is In New York City* is a great track, with beautiful imagery and also a beautiful guitar sound.**
That actually was [inspired by] a friend of mine who lives in New York, who I've known all my life. When she came to visit me she gave me a T-shirt that said: 'Maybe love is in New York City'. And I thought: "Oh, what a great title." That's where that came from.

It's hard to talk about songs and their origins and what they're about… I know what an audience wants to know, it's just hard to talk about it. There's the feeling that if you have to explain a song, then the song didn't really work. But then I get it from many angles. You know, the process of writing is always different with every song. There's not really a method. There is for *some* people.



At the moment, I'd like to think this album is kind of refreshing for people who like guitar-based rock'n'roll. Because there's been many years where it's all done in the studio, and songs are written by committee. I mean, I've seen people try to get together and write. It's all about writing a hit. Nothing wrong with that, that's what traditionally they did in the Brill Building, you know? But this has become more than just about a hit. Burt Bacharach and Hal David would write songs and give them to a great singer like Dionne Warwick. But they tailored their songs [to her], because they knew her voice and they knew she could deliver.

Now – I'm not even criticising, it's just an observation – someone will write a song, send it to someone they don't know, [and] the person might or might not reject it. If they don't use it, they might go to another set of songwriters or another artist. The artist will often change one line and say they won't do it unless they get a songwriting credit.

This album is kind of old-school. There's something autistic about rock'n'roll. It doesn't really change, you know? Very simple format, but with those four pieces you can do a lot. You can almost evoke anything. I guess that's what happened when punk came along. The seventies had started, and there was prog rock and it got a little too flabby for a lot of people, so they wanted to deconstruct it.

"I'd like to think this album is kind of refreshing for people who like guitar-based rock'n'roll."

Chrissie Hynde

Anyway, it keeps going around in cycles. You're a music writer, we could be having this discussion in any bar in the world right now. Everyone's talking about it all the time. "What do you think about music now?" I don't mean just in an interview situation, but just the subject. I grew up in the late sixties… You know, AM radio then went into FM radio. AM radio was coast to coast and it was very regional. Every city had its own radio station *and* its own playlist! When MTV came along it all got filtered into one thing. It had to go first through a video – often a soft-porn video, because some of the artists knew that sold – and that became sorta dance music, I guess. It wasn't rock'n'roll any more. If you look at videos that were made back then, they look silly now. The pomposity of it. You can smell the money that went into it.

I think we're at a moment now, especially with this lockdown, of getting things simple again. I mean, I live alone. I don't cook. You know, if I need something to eat I go to the shop or whatever restaurant's nearby. But with this [pandemic], the brown-rice hippie in me has re-emerged. And she's a pretty good cook, as it turns out!

Anyway, I think I'm talking too much.

GETTY

It's interesting what you said about quarantine and making people do things themselves again. I'm sort of like that too. I live in New York City. I don't cook, there are usually restaurants down the street. But in the past couple of months – not that I've become Julia Child – I'm cooking for the first time. You know what I mean?
[Laughs] I think everyone's experienced this. First of all, everyone's responded to the wildlife coming back. I mean, the birds – I've never heard them this loud. Everything's vibrant out there. And when I say to someone that I've actually enjoyed this, almost everyone I've said that too says: "Actually, so have I!" It's like they didn't wanna say it. But everyone's appreciated how much they were part of the rat race.

2020 marks forty years since the first Pretenders album came out. Do you ever think about the time when you were making that record, or even just being in England back then?
Well, I was here for a while before I recorded the album. I didn't know what I was gonna do when I came to England. I just wanted to see the world. I was pretty sure I wasn't gonna stay in Akron, and I wanted to be in England because that's where all my favorite bands were from. There you go, I was an Anglophile.

I put a lot of effort into getting that band together and meeting the right people. I couldn't get it together in the punk scene because, frankly, I was a little more musically diverse. Being an American growing up on radio, and I was a couple of years older than most of the people in punk. They all grew up on David Bowie and Roxy Music, but I grew up on James Brown, Bobby Womack…

By the time I was twenty-four I thought I was too old to get in a band. Then punk came along. There were some people in bands from New York that were even older than me, and I thought: "Fuck it, I'm doin' it in that case!" But twenty-four, that was about the time you got *out* of a band. You know, think about what Otis Redding did. He died when he was, what, twenty-six, twenty-seven. Huge legacy of music! Tim Buckley! Died when he was twenty-eight. Ten albums. Amy Winehouse died when she was twenty-seven. She didn't make that many albums, but she made a major impact, with an original voice.

Jim Hendrix was another.
Hendrix! You know, my man. I'm looking at a picture of him right now. And then you've got Bob Dylan, who is going strong and he's pushing eighty! He's doing some of the best work he's ever done. Listening to [Dylan's latest album, released in 2020] *Murder Most Foul* jolted me out of this weird frame of mind when the lockdown started. It was like: "What the fuck's going on?" Like everyone else, I was sort of adrift mentally. And then someone sent me that song, I listened to it and I thought: "Fucking hell!" It really lifted me out of a sort of malaise. Despite the sombre subject matter, he's still funny! Bob's always funny. And it spoke so much to me.

Hate For Sale is out now via BMG.

DEAN CHALKLEY / CAMERA PRESS

TOP REISSUES OF 2020

With a stack of major anniversaries and desirable compilations coming out this year we were spoiled for choice. Here are some definitely worth the investment.

BLACK SABBATH

Paranoid Super Deluxe BMG

What we said: "Fiftieth-anniversary five-LP/four-CD edition of a metal landmark, expanded with live recordings. This was never a band relying solely on bludgeoning riffs and Beelzebub. Contrary to stereotype, Sabbath always displayed intriguing prog tendencies and an ear for the atmospheric… The August 1970 Casino De Montreux performance begins with the sound of feedback and of nails being hammered, presumably into the stage. The filthy fuzz of Tony Iommi's riffs is a visceral joy."

MOTÖRHEAD

Ace Of Spades (Deluxe Box) BMG

What we said: "This 40th-anniversary reissue of Motörhead's seminal *Ace Of Spades* album comprises 73 tracks. That's 73 grizzled, glorious, gut-busting slabs of full-on rock'n'roll. And as great as the original studio album is, you ain't lived until you've heard this box set's two double live albums taken from the Ace Up Your Sleeve tour… or the double album of outtakes and rare tracks, including an alternative version of *Ace Of Spades* that nearly beats the original."

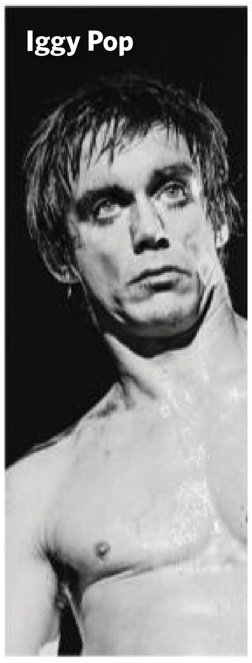
UFO

Strangers In The Night CHRYSALIS

What we said: "This eight-disc set, covering various cities and sets on that [1978] tour, somehow manages to improve on perfection. The new, judiciously detailed packaging (with excellent liner notes from Michael Hann) is to be applauded… A very welcome reminder that at one point in time UFO were at the very apex of creativity and as performers, and always just a heartbeat away from the wheels coming off."

Phil Lynott

Lemmy


Iggy Pop

ELTON JOHN

Elton: Jewel Box UMI

What we said: "A 148-track, eight-CD set, two minutes short of 10 hours (cherry-picking vinyl versions are available), *Elton: Jewel Box* is every bit the treasure trove for fans that it aims to be, gathering a cornucopia of rarities, previously unreleased tracks and deep cuts that indicate Elton's own favourite career moments. Offering gems, misfires and revelations, it's an absorbing opening of the vaults."

THIN LIZZY

Rock Legends UMC

What we said: "The bootlegs have been out there for years, YouTube clips too, Thin Lizzy recordings that were never officially released. Demos of classic songs, rough takes of other tracks that missed the cut for albums. Now, in this box set 10 years in the making, the best of all this is collected, along with some material never previously heard outside of the band's inner circle."

SLADE

Cum On Feel The Hitz BMG

What we said: "It's double, it's vinyl, it's got all the hits, everything's correctly misspelled, and on the cover Dave Hill appears to be wearing some sort of bra made out of gilded tortoises. You'd have to be an idiot not to buy it."

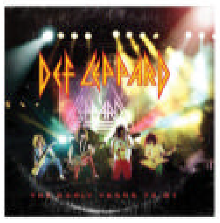
THE STOOGES

Fun House (50th Anniversary) RHINO

What we said: "The Stooges' second album is a beautiful thing; a seven-track study in the feral and unhinged. The 1,970 punters who manage to acquire this set (for 325 quid) get 15 180g slabs of vinyl – the original album over two 45 rpm 12-inch discs, the second of which is etched, the complete sessions across a dozen more discs, two replica seven-inch singles, a 28-page book, two posters, two prints, a slip-mat and a 45-adaptor."

DEF LEPPARD

The Early Years 79-81 UMC/VIRGIN



What we said: "Remasters of first two albums – *On Through The Night* and *High 'N' Dry* – were included in the 2018 box set *Rock Of Ages Vol 1*. But the considerable carrot/excuse for buying them again now are this new box set's three bonus CDs: a live set from the tour for Leppard's first album, and two discs of collectables."

MARILLION

Script For A Jester's Tear PARLOPHONE

What we said: "*Script For A Jester's Tear* was the album that built the beast, and, following deluxe reissues of *Brave*, *Misplaced Childhood* and *Afraid Of Sunlight*, it's that debut album's turn to be given a polish and an update. The Deluxe Edition is rounded off by a quite brilliant live set recorded a few months before the album's release, at one of the band's spiritual homes, the legendary Marquee on London's Wardour Street. Marvellous times."

THE ROLLING STONES

Goats Head Soup UNIVERSAL

What we said: "A remastered, multi-format edition of the band's 1973 classic, with previously unheard tracks. After 47 years in the vaults it has no right to still sound so fresh. Their creative studio peak might have been (just) behind them, but for a taste of the Stones at their down-and-dirtiest *Goats Head Soup* will always be the dish of the day."

GETTY x2; LEMMY: ALAN BALLARD/PRESS

RUSH

Permanent Waves 40th anniversary ANTHEM/UME

What we said: "This lavish reissue has added poignancy, being the first major one since we lost drummer/lyricist Neil Peart, and *Permanent Waves* is the album that redefined who and what Rush were as a band. The 2015 remaster of the original gleams brilliantly… and comes in four different editions, including a 180-gram vinyl one."

IGGY POP

The Bowie Years UME

What we said: "1977's twin towers [*The Idiot* and *Lust For Life*] Bowie-branded and with familiar extras… Nothing should detract from these two glorious studio landmarks, or the fact that had Bowie not enabled them, Iggy might not have marinated into today's much-loved punk godfather, artisan and raconteur."

TOM PETTY

Wildflowers & All The Rest WARNER

What we said: "Petty's second solo album is now available as a two-CD or three-LP set, box or deluxe edition, the latter including a necklace. The box set features a collection of Petty's wholly solo home recordings, and an 11-song live set… There's a lot to take in, but Petty was at one of his many peaks and this is worth luxuriating in."

NEIL YOUNG

Homegrown REPRISE

What we said: "Young's legendary lost album resurfaces 45 years later. The familiar material remains stark and beautiful. While *White Line's 'That old white line is a friend of mine'* speaks for itself, Emmylou Harris is glowing on *Star Of Bethlehem*, and *Love Is A Rose* is jauntiness itself. Of the more unfamiliar, *Florida* is atonal spoken-word indulgence, but there's gold to be mined from this self-lacerating despair."

IRON MAIDEN

Iron Maiden (40th Anniversary) PARLOPHONE

What we said: "This vinyl edition comes as a picture disc, offering the dubious pleasure of watching Eddie's snarling face spinning menacingly as it plays. While no bonus material has been added, the original album remains as thrilling as it always was. The energy and streetwise aggression is undeniable, and in their first great songs – *Running Free, Phantom Of The Opera, Iron Maiden* – a legend was born."

CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL

Cosmo's Factory CRAFT

What we said: "The 50th-anniversary vinyl edition of an American classic, now newly remastered. Topping the charts on both sides of the Atlantic in 1970, *Cosmo's Factory* pulled off the enviable feat of being both an artistic and commercial success. More importantly, perhaps, it also dispelled the tired myth that CCR were just a great singles band."

KING CRIMSON

The Complete 1969 Recordings PANEGYRIC

What we said: "This epic 26-disc box set tells the story of *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, one of the most audacious debut albums ever released. Seven of the CDs focus on King Crimson's live work, which here includes their festival debut as unlikely openers for the Rolling Stones in Hyde Park. Steven Wilson sprinkles his magic dust over the original album, while the recording sessions – complete with in-studio dialogue and alternative versions – are for the Crimson hard-core."

THE GRATEFUL DEAD

Workingman's Dead (50th Anniversary) RHINO

What we said: "This package finds the Dead at their most fertile and inventive. The original album, remixed and remastered to perfection, comes with a complete contemporary concert from 1971 that includes pieces from follow-up album *American Beauty*, while unveiling live versions of the epic songs *Bertha, Wharf Rat* and guitarist/vocalist Bob Weir's bible-bash *Greatest Story Ever Told* that appeared on his debut solo record *Ace*."

DEREK AND THE DOMINOS

Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs (50th Anniversary Edition) UME/POLYDOR

What we said: "Derek And The Dominos' ever-astonishing sole studio album is celebrated, with half-speed mastering enhancing its dense, skyscraper catharsis and majestic blues on double vinyl. Packages include the 40th-anniversary set's extras debut on double wax, including Phil Spector's punk-speed single version of *Tell The Truth*, and the band's TV appearance on *The Johnny Cash Show* that unveiled the wasted optimism of *Got To Get Better In A Little While*."

BE-BOP DELUXE

Axe Victim CHERRY RED

What we said: "A schizoid sprawl of glammed-up histrionics, prog, blues and folked-up rumination, Bill Nelson's BBD debut was a bold but unfocused opening statement. This lavish multi-format reissue features a full duplicate copy of the album, newly remastered in 5.1 surround sound stereo. The limited-edition four-disc box set also includes two John Peel sessions from 1973 and 1974, one previously unreleased."

JOHN LENNON

Gimme Some Truth: The Ultimate Mixes CAPITOL/UME

What we said: "These now achingly familiar songs never sounded so good. Remixed top to tail by Paul Hicks, its 36 cuts were selected by Yoko and son Sean to tell John's post-Beatles story and illustrate his many facets, thus turning their eternal grief into an immaculately packaged multi-format tribute (Deluxe includes a 124-page book telling the songs' stories, plus previously unseen photos and archive memorabilia)."

OZZY OSBOURNE

Blizzard Of Ozz (40th Anniversary) SONY/LEGACY

What we said: "*Blizzard Of Ozz* framed Ozzy's unique voice in a modern, post-Sabbath context… Marking its fortieth anniversary, the album has now been reissued on suitably garish black/red swirl vinyl, with the expanded digital version adding bonus (but previously released) material, including live tracks from the *Blizzard* tour and the fast-fingered Randy Rhoads solo *RR* – his answer to Eddie Van Halen's *Eruption*."

THE DOORS

Morrison Hotel (50th Anniversary Edition) RHINO

What we said: "Remastered by original engineer Bruce Botnick, this 50th-anniversary reissue features an hour-plus of out-takes that track the evolution of their Bakersfield trip to *Roadhouse Blues, Peace Frog* (originally a poem in Morrison's *Abortion Stories* chronicle) and the downbeat *Blue Sunday*. It's all cracking stuff."

Ozzy Osbourne

John Fogerty

Fish

Rush's Geddy Lee

GETTY x3

OUT OF THIS WORLD

Strangers In The Night captured a great rock band at their peak, and is one of the all-time great live albums. But by the time it was released, **UFO** were no longer the band who'd made it.

Words: **Michael Hann** Photos: **Ross Halfin**

It seems incredible now that a live album could be a band's defining statement – as much a relic of the 1970s as the Raleigh Chopper and only TV three channels.

But so it was. For bands who never quite achieved great consistency on studio records, or who were never quite as comfortable in the studio as on stage, the live album was the perfect vehicle: part greatest hits, part introduction for newcomers, part proof that the band really could be as good as their supporters might claim. And it worked. Just ask Thin Lizzy, for one. Or ask UFO, for whom *Strangers In The Night* was just as important as *Live And Dangerous* was for Lizzy.

"We was always more of a live band," says UFO singer Phil Mogg. "We had a pretty cool set-list. We didn't get to that until we reached the live album, though."

That's important. Because *Strangers In The Night* isn't just a record of what UFO sounded like on stage in October '78. It's also a record of their transformation over five years since Michael Schenker had joined as lead guitarist – their transformation as players, as songwriters, as arrangers. It's a record of how they became, for a while at least, a truly great rock band.

The UFO that Schenker had joined were a very different group to the one he helped them become. "Basically, they were a psychedelic rock band," he says. "Instrumentally there wasn't much going on, it was more atmospheric. But there was a completely different chemistry [with the new line-up]. You take one piece out and put another in and you get different outcomes."

"I think at that point we were all living in a house in Bounds Green, dropping acid and going to the Roundhouse," Mogg told me last year. "I guess we went from there to straightening up, thinking: 'Do you really want to do this? How serious are you?' Basically, we got serious. Not too serious, though."

> **"Basically, we got serious. Not too serious, though."**
> **Phil Mogg**

Over the course of five albums – *Phenomenon, Force It, No Heavy Petting, Lights Out* and *Obsession* – they went from a band who were trying to find their way to one that barrelled down the road. They toured unrelentingly, generating excitement and buzz, but never quite made the leap to the top echelon. Often, in the US, they were an opening act, but that suited their dynamism and gave them the chance to hit hard.

"We were very lucky to get some good opening slots," drummer Andy Parker says. "We were getting exposed to larger audiences. If you do a decent job a lot of those people will come and see you in the future, and that was working for us. I used to love that Special Guest slot, the second band on a three-band bill. You didn't have to play for too long, the crowd was already warmed up and you could get home early. You could really hit them hard with a shorter set."

A shorter set, and no headliner responsibilities, allowed the band to indulge themselves, too. Take the three shows they played with Fleetwood Mac in California in 1976. On the way to one of them, Mogg told me in 2012, they realised they were lacking in certain pick-me-ups, so they arranged to meet up with the April Wine touring party at a truck stop.

"So we got there, and this guy comes along with a briefcase chock-a-block with stuff. 'Oh, this is great,' we said. It was a bit like one of those movie scenes where they chop out a line that goes from here to next week. In our bravado we were: 'Yeah!' But by the time we reached the gig no one could talk. We were absolutely rigid. Time to go on, and we couldn't move. We were on stage, absolutely stationary."

So paralysing was the drug that Mogg could barely move his mouth to get the words out. ▷

Not strangers after ***Strangers In The Night***: (l-r) Pete Way, Phil Mogg, Paul Raymond, Michael Schenker, Andy Parker.

There was alcohol by the bucketload too. "It seems comical now," Parker says. "It was white wine for the sound-check, then beer, then on to the hard stuff in the evening. That was the good thing about the Special Guest slots, there was always booze left if you raided other people's dressing rooms. We were doing cocaine and weed. The really heavy stuff, the really nasty stuff, didn't come in till later. I never dabbled in that. I did quite a bit of blow, but then you end up staring at the ceiling at three in the morning when you have to be up in three hours."

The arrival of Paul Raymond in July 1976, to play keyboards and rhythm guitar, was the thing that gave UFO the extra depth they needed. "He completed the chemistry," Schenker says. "He was very good at colouring in, and that made it perfect. He was an excellent songwriter, too. But he didn't take all the credit for his writing, because he had a contractual situation."

Pete Way, the bass player who was the band's irregular heartbeat, was writing too, and UFO became a band in which every member was making the maximum possible contribution.

"Pete was writing dirty stuff, and I would put in a melodic chorus to it, like *Lights Out*, that would balance it out," Schenker explains. "The keyboards coloured it. It's incredible how Paul Raymond did the intro to *Love To Love*, which started as an instrumental I wrote, then it turned into a vocal song. And the colouring in *Lights Out* is really good."

"If you wanted to know what UFO was about, go see us live. We were always a band that tried to include the audience."

Andy Parker

By autumn '78, although relations with Schenker were already fraught there was a sense that the band they were on the brink of something. "We were probably just about hitting our peak then," Parker says. "Michael was still with the band. We were at the stage where we could do decent-sized arenas on our own. We would do three nights in Chicago, which was our biggest market. Before, we'd been doing them with the likes of Rush and Blue Öyster Cult and Foghat and Styx and Jethro Tull and those kinds of bands as Special Guests, but by this time we were doing them on our own.

"I always thought that while we made great studio albums, if you really wanted to know what UFO was about, go see us live. We were always a band that tried to include the audience. I've seen so many big bands that play at the audience – it's all about what they want to do, rather than what the audience wants – but with this band we included the audience."

Strangers In The Night was recorded over two nights in October 1978, in Chicago and Louisville. Ron Nevison, who had produced UFO's two previous studio albums, was brought in again to oversee its completion. "He wasn't the easiest guy to work with, but man he was good at what he did." Schenker says. "He was obnoxious. But he knew what he wanted and he knew what the end result had to be."

There's no doubting Nevison's contribution to *Strangers In The Night*. It's an album on which muscle and melody are in perfect balance, from front to back (and the bonus live sets that accompany the CD version of this year's reissue prove that UFO could cut it without the need for additional studio work). It's a mixture of great songs and bravura

performances – the out-and-out rockers have a force and attack missing from the studio versions (*Doctor Doctor*, especially, makes the original sound like a demo); the longer and more emotional tracks, such as *Love To Love* and *Rock Bottom*, have an expressiveness that heavy bands at the time rarely bothered to attempt.

But even as UFO reached their zenith, things were going wrong. The exact circumstances of Schenker's departure remain cloudy – you'll get a different answer depending on who you ask, and possibly which day of the week you ask them. Parker is certain the band knew he was going to be leaving at the end of the US tour in autumn 1978. The version that will go down in history – because it's on Wikipedia – has him leaving shortly after the final show of the tour, in Palo Alto on October 29. But according to Schenker he didn't leave until the band were working on the mixing of *Strangers*.

What isn't disputed is that relations between him and his bandmates, especially Mogg, had been deteriorating for some time. Schenker hated touring, and drank to combat his stage fright. After the success of *Lights Out*, rather than celebrating a breakthrough, he told his partner Gabi that this meant years more of being trapped. "It happens to many bands: the moment they make it big, they all collapse," he says. "And they get into a vicious cycle of being obnoxious and completely controlled by alcohol and drugs."

He was also sick of Mogg, who he felt was violently aggressive. Indeed, even with decades of distance, mention of the singer still riles him. Five minutes after completing our interview, he calls me and embarks on a monologue that opens with: "If you look at Iron Maiden, Steve Harris copied Pete Way, and the guitarists copied me, but the singer didn't copy Phil Mogg. Same with Guns N' Roses – a complete different vocal. Metallica – a complete different vocal. And Def Leppard – a complete different vocal. *Strangers In The Night* had an influence because of the guitar playing. It was the guitar playing that was copied by all of these bands…" A few minutes later, he concludes: "It's impossible for me to comprehend how people think. Why are people only seeing what they can't get? People have a problem saying thank you. Instead of saying thank you, they say fuck you. Nobody is copying Phil Mogg, by the way. Goodbye."

Then there were disagreements during the compiling of the album, at the Record Plant studio in New York, one being Schenker demanding they go for a different take of *Rock Bottom* from the one Nevison had chosen. By the time *Strangers* was released, on January 2 1979, Schenker was no longer in the band.

'*Strangers In The Night* is an album where muscle and melody are in perfect balance, from front to back.'

"He did an awful lot of walking, didn't he?" Mogg says. "He used up the shoe leather. Dear oh dear. He's always walking away from something. I can't remember when he actually went. I remember him doing the album with as much enthusiasm as everybody else was putting into it. I remember that he wanted to keep replacing stuff, and in the end Ron said: 'I ain't fucking replacing shit. This is a live album.' And Michael went: 'Poor, poor *Rock Bottom*', and walked out. We didn't see him for a while."

The sad thing for all concerned was that this was happening when the band were at a high point. UFO moved on, to a poppier sound. Schenker rejoined the Scorpions, briefly, then formed his own band. Neither parties ever topped the music they had made up to then.

Money problems were arising, too. In 1980 UFO headlined the Reading Festival for a fee of £86,000, of which the band members saw £1,000 each, apart from new boy Neil Carter who got half that. After UFO spluttered out in 1983, Mogg was so poor he had to go to live with a friend and sign on for unemployment benefit.

Strangers, though, was when things were special for UFO. It's one of those rare live albums in which the interaction between all the band members is perfect – not just Schenker's spotlit lead playing, but also Mogg's command of the audience (interestingly, Schenker notes the "monotony" of Mogg's voice, then observes that it combined perfectly with his own melodic sense to produce something greater than they could have been separately). Parker's drumming is combustible. Remember too the contributions of the two members who have passed away: Way and Raymond were just as integral to the sound of *Strangers In The Night* as Mogg and Schenker were. The just-released expanded version of the album stands as a tribute to the pair of them.

Nowadays, even Schenker, who was merciless about its inadequacies after its release, has made his peace. "Today *Strangers In The Night* sounds good to me, because I'm not in it. I have distance and I hear it differently. I am affected by it differently because it became popular. And everybody likes it and you automatically become part of that wave. Everything influences your later opinion."

Parker's reaction is less complex: "We were at the apex of our career, and it just exemplifies the band. It will always be my favourite."

And, let's be honest, mine and yours too, probably. It's UFO's defining statement.

***Strangers In The Night* expanded deluxe edition is out now via Chrysalis.**

REMEMBERING PETE

The late UFO bass player is celebrated in a brand new photo book.

Strangers In The Night is proof that UFO were, and are, one of rock's ultimate live bands. And Pete Way was their maverick heartbeat. Now, in a new book by music photographer Ross Halfin, Way has been captured in vivid, evocative definition.

Across 240 pages, *Pete Way* by Ross Halfin charts the life and legacy of the UFO bassist, with classic and previously unseen photos taken by Halfin, complemented by exclusive new insights and memories (compiled by journalist/author Mark Blake) from Way's old bandmates, as well as Ozzy Osbourne, Geddy Lee, Joe Elliott, Slash and Steve Harris to name a few. From iconic live shots to backstage snaps, it's an energetic, commanding portrait.

"Of all the people I've known over the years, Pete could be the funniest and also the most infuriating person," Halfin says. "Of all the recent musicians to leave the stage, Pete's exit hit me the hardest, so I wanted to do this book in his honour with the people that really knew him also sharing their memories. The idea of this book is really to celebrate a friend of mine, and for all his faults he was a very funny person and someone I always considered a true friend."

The book is available in both a standard version and deluxe edition, and is reviewed on page 97.

Pete Way by Ross Halfin is published this month by Rufus Publications.

WHEN LIGHTNING STRIKES

As Diamond Head celebrate the 40th anniversary of their debut album *Lightning To The Nations*, guitarist **Brian Tatler** and long-time fan **Lars Ulrich** catch up over Zoom.

Words: **Dave Ling**

It's July 10, 1981, and Diamond Head are at the Woolwich Odeon in South London, wrapping up a 19-date UK tour promoting the previous year's debut album *Lightning To The Nations*. Like their record, the tour was self-financed by the group and their management. *Lighting* had received ecstatic reviews, but, tellingly, while Iron Maiden, Saxon and Def Leppard had taken vital steps forwards by securing record contracts, the Stourbridge-based four-piece wouldn't be signed to MCA until the following year.

Among the audience in Woolwich was a Danish teenager called Lars Ulrich, who had jetted in from his Californian home for the show. The aspiring musician had written to Diamond Head's Fan Club and received a reply from Linda Harris, mother of lead singer Sean and the band's manager. Prior to the show, Ulrich spent six weeks dossing down first with the Harrises and then at guitarist Brian Tatler's place. A lifelong friendship was born.

Almost four decades later, Tatler and Ulrich still talk regularly, mostly by text or email, although as Lars tells *Classic Rock*: "It doesn't happen often enough." Both remember with fondness that fateful night in Woolwich and also the ensuing shared weeks.

Diamond Head knew of Ulrich's pilgrimage in advance, and were happy to meet a guy committed enough to fly five thousand miles to see them. "We had thought: 'Wow, we've got one fan in America, that's a start – it can grow from there'," Tatler recalls with typical earnestness.

When Ulrich returned to the States, things began to pick up for his own band. In a letter, Ulrich wrote: "This geezer in LA is doing a compilation album of 10 new, young LA heavy metal bands and our band are on it with a track called *Hit The Lights*." The 'geezer' in question was Brian Slagel of Metal Blade Records. Sure enough, the track found its way on to a collection called *Metal Massacre*. In the same letter, Ulrich told Tatler: "Our band is called Metallica. The lead guitarist is pretty fast. I think you'll like him."

Although "pretty fast" guitarist Dave Mustaine, wouldn't last long in the band, Metallica went from strength to strength. Diamond Head, conversely, were held back by amateur management, an incompatible record label, personnel instability and the type of ill fortune that made *The Fast Show*'s Unlucky Alf seem like a Lottery winner. Everything imploded in 1983 when, during the pre-CD age, a manufacturing error caused all 20,000 vinyl copies of their third album, *Canterbury*, to skip.

The following year Metallica covered Diamond Head's *Am I Evil?* as a B-side, and later reworked *Helpless*, *The Prince* and *It's Electric*. This helped to fuel a three-year reunion that began in '91, although when at the turn of the millennium Diamond Head regrouped for a third time it was without Sean Harris. The two albums the band made with brilliantly monickered singer Nick Tart helped to keep the band afloat, but all too often it appeared to be a lost cause.

They brought in London-based Danish singer Rasmus Bom Andersen two albums ago, for 2016's *Diamond Head*, and it's difficult to overstate the ripple effect caused by the London-based Dane. Diamond Head are now playing bigger gigs, receiving rave press and impacting upon a new generation of fans.

"Ras has made a great difference. Everyone seems to be more welcoming of the band with him on board," Tatler says proudly. "We've become much more powerful as a live band and we're moving in the right direction."

"Y'see," Ulrich says, "that's what happens when you surround yourself with Danish people!"

The idea of Diamond Head re-recording their debut *Lightning To The Nations* for its fortieth anniversary came from drummer Karl Wilcox.

"A lot of bands will remix or remaster an album," Tatler explains, "but we wanted to re-make it with our current line-up, using high-gain amps to get a bigger, fatter sound. Back then we did it in a week with no overdubs. This was an opportunity too good to miss."

Long-time friends and mutual fans: Brian Tatler and Lars Ulrich.

Re-bottling *Lightning*: Brian Tatler today. Inset: early Diamond Head days.

"We did *Lightning To The Nations* in a week with no overdubs. [To re-record it] was an opportunity too good to miss."

Brian Tatler

Today, Diamond Head fan-boy Ulrich has a list of questions for Brian Tatler, including what happened to the album's master multi-track tapes, and also the guy who produced it, Muff Murfin?

"I got the stereo masters thanks to you, when you rescued them from a German label," Tatler replies. "But the original masters are still at the studio where we made the album [the Old Smithy in Worcester]." To the second part he replies: "Muff was a singer in the 1960s. He looked a bit like Jason King (titular character in 70s TV drama *Jason King*, played by Peter Wyngarde)."

Ulrich also wants to know whether the debut's first thousand copies were released in a plain white sleeve to "command a certain mystique", or because of "limited resources"?

"More the latter," Tatler responds, "but it definitely made it the Holy Grail for NWOBHM collectors."

The new album's bonus tracks see Diamond Head 2020 covering hard rock standards by Led Zeppelin (*Immigrant Song*), Judas Priest (*Sinner*) and Deep Purple (*Rat Bat Blue*). Most significantly they also covered Metallica's *No Remorse*. "I liked the thought of the wheel turning full circle," Tatler says, smiling.

"Brian sent me their version [of *No Remorse*] a few months ago," Ulrich adds enthusiastically, although he is yet to hear the reworked album. "I thought everything about their *No Remorse* was great – song, performance and sonically. It's very cool.

"Why did you pick that one, Brian?" ▷

MAIN: MICK PAYTON/PRESS

Backstage at Milton Keynes Bowl in 1993 when Diamond Head supported Metallica: (l-r) Lars Ulrich, Sean Harris, Brian Tatler, Karl Wilcox.

"I wanted to do something from the debut," Tatler says, "and *Seek And Destroy* was a bit too obvious. *No Remorse* had a certain Diamond Head quality to it, it has our style within the writing, and in rehearsals it sounded great right away. We had to work on the others much more."

Back in 1991, with Metallica's Black Album going stratospheric, this writer conducted a psycho analysis-themed interview with Ulrich for *RAW* magazine. Among the questions was: 'You're offered everlasting fame at the expense of a group you really admire. Do you seize the opportunity?' Ulrich laughed, and then replied: "Didn't we do that to Diamond Head already?"

"Hey, one thing you can never fault me for is not speaking the truth," Ulrich says after a nervous-sounding laugh. "I cringe whenever interviewers throw me a quote from thirty years ago, because we talked such a load of shit. I had a playful relationship with the British press in those days. Have I said a bunch of shit along the way? Of course I have. But we [Metallica] started out as a Diamond Head cover band, and although we piggy-backed on [those roots] our own sound came out of those songs. The story [of the two bands] is one of respect, appreciation and love."

Over the decades, both Tatler and Ulrich have been hugely significant to each other's life. Do they sometimes wonder how things might have turned out had their worlds not collided?

"Well, the three of us would probably not be sitting here and Zooming right now," Ulrich says, laughing. "But I don't spend a lot of time thinking about 'what if?'s."

"The whole thing was beneficial for both of us," Tatler says. "Diamond Head were an influence on Metallica, who went on to become a legendary band. Not to mention the financial implications [for us]."

Ulrich insists we should "forget about success and financial stuff", emphasising: "Brian and I were kindred spirits. Had our stories played out differently they would still have involved music. Embracing music and making it your life was always going to be a calling for us."

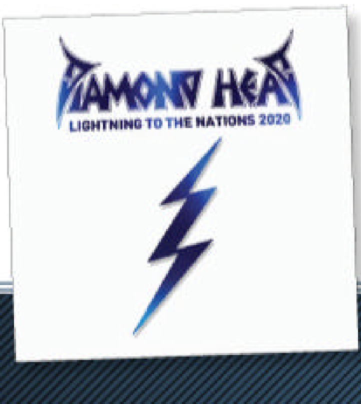
"Brian and I were kindred spirits. Had our stories played out differently they would still have involved music."

Lars Ulrich

What are the chances of the two of you doing some kind of project together?

"My number hasn't changed," Lars says instantly. "Remember that one time at the Reading Festival when we jammed in the tuning room? And James [Hetfield] came in…"

"That's right," Tatler says excitedly. "Shavo [Odadjian, bassist] from System Of A Down was there, and we did [Metallica's] *Battery*. I didn't know it very well but I had a go anyway."



"Our best years are still ahead of us," says Ulrich. "Hopefully there could be something more solid in the future. Maybe we'll write a song together or play something cool."

Why not use lockdown to make it happen?

"That would be super-fun," Ulrich says.

There have been rumours that Metallica will make an album during covid downtime. What's the progress with that, Lars?

"Glacial. These are the craziest of times and nothing is letting up. There's a little bit of movement [in that direction], but it's hard to do a lot when we're not together."

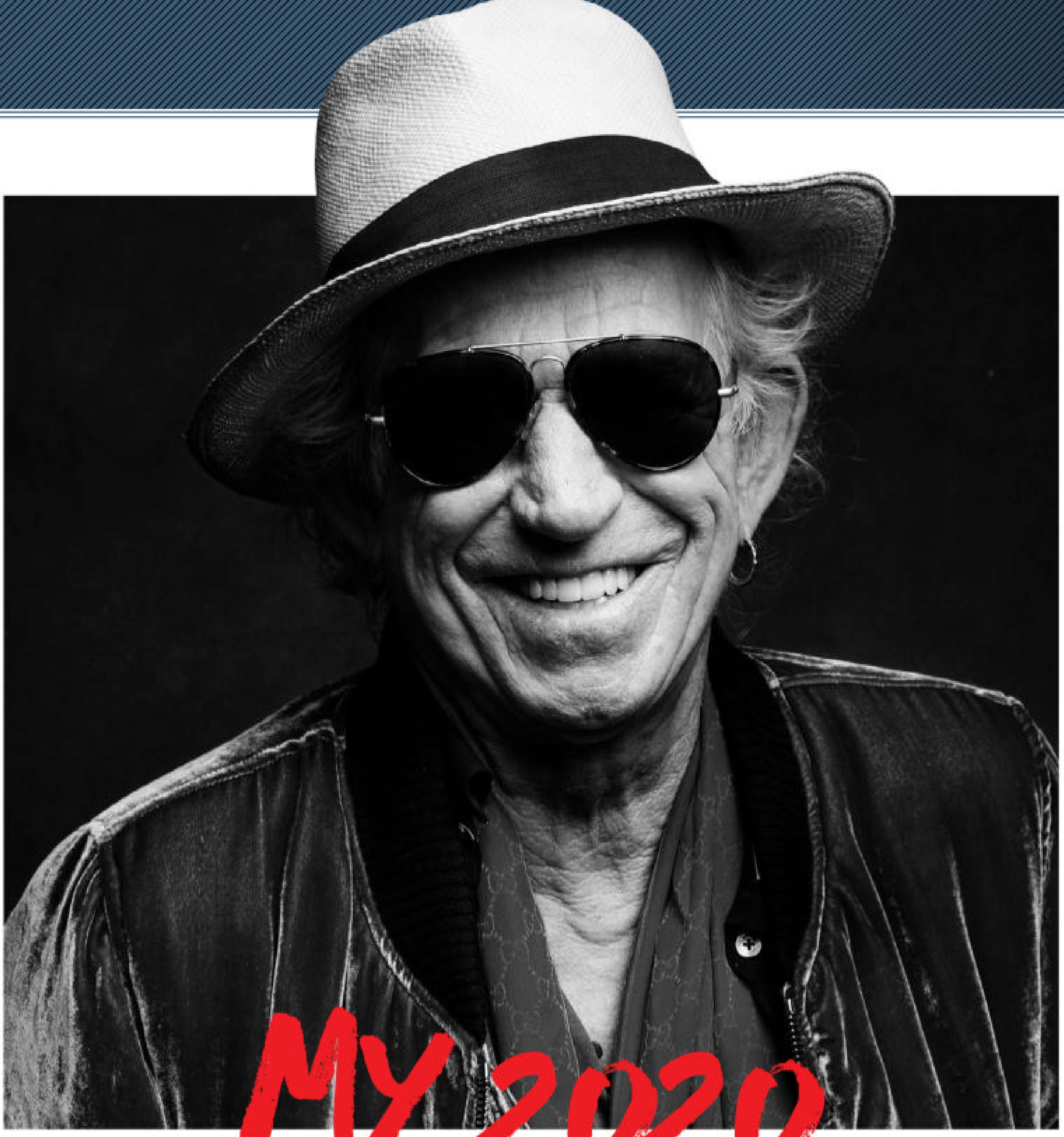
Having been born in different countries, and poles apart in terms of backgrounds (Ulrich was a rich kid whose father played tennis professionally; Tatler worked as a car mechanic after leaving school), what do the pair both have in common and how are they different?

"Lars has much more drive than me," Tatler admits. "With someone like him in your band you've a far better chance. Diamond Head didn't have that back in the day, sadly."

Still, 39 years after they first met, and despite their very different career paths, there is one thing that continues to render the bond between Brian Tatler and Lars Ulrich unbreakable.

"Forget about Metallica and how the story played out, at heart I'm still a music fan," Ulrich concludes. "Brian and still share that love in its purest form and it'll never change."

Diamond Head's Lightning To The Nations 2020 is available now via Silver Lining Music. Metallica's S&M2 is out now via Blackened.



My 2020
KEITH RICHARDS

Like everyone else, his year has been dictated by you know what. And while he's behind on his reading, he's still found time to "sit around writing songs, basically, or parts of songs".

Interview: **Ian Fortnam**

It's doubtful that there's any single individual in the rock firmament more deserving of the accolade 'needs no introduction' than Keith Richards. In living the 'Human Riff' legend for almost 60 years, the Rolling Stones guitarist has attained near-mythic status. But coronavirus has no respect for reputation, so Keith's in lockdown too.

Cheerfully resigned to 'hunkering down' in his Connecticut bubble for the duration, Keith's his usual effusive self, whether looking back on 'solo' years fronting the X-Pensive Winos or looking forward to a return to so-called 'normal'.

Did you find that playing with the X-Pensive Winos after so many years with the Rolling Stones was a liberating experience?
Yeah, it was in a way. It was a different experience. Being a frontman was very unusual for me. I appreciated Mick [Jagger]'s job a lot more by the time I finished, I can tell you. Because [on stage] with the Stones I can go back and forth at my will and whim. I can hide there with Charlie [Watts] or I can go up front. But I realised the non-stop pressure of singing every song, though at the same time I was expecting it to be a challenge, and it was. It was just a matter of stepping up to it, really, and it was very enjoyable.

In a roundabout way, if Mick had never made ['85 solo album] *She's The Boss* you would never have put the Winos together. Although it probably wouldn't have been your choice to work outside of the Stones, did working apart ultimately help you to work together again?
Yeah, absolutely right. I think it was that time, around '85, when Mick and I both realised that we had to take a break. So I just intended to take a break, but the next thing I know Mick's off making records and all this stuff. After about a year I was like: "Oh, man. I've gotta do something." I'd since been hanging around with Steve Jordan [drummer, producer, Winos all-rounder] and [drummer] Charley Drayton, and I'd got this gig with Aretha Franklin doing *Jumping Jack Flash* with Steve, and that led to *Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll* with Chuck Berry. By the time we'd finished doing that, it felt ready to try it on myself. Steve and I had started to write songs together, and we thought that we'd better do something with them. So I put this great band together: [bassist] Ivan Neville, [guitarist] Waddy Wachtel, and it was a pleasure to have [vocalist] Miss Sarah Dash as well.

> **"This pandemic might change the way we [the Stones] want to sound."**

With time on your hands, in light of covid-19, are you a habitual guitar player? Do you sit and play along with the television?
[Laughs] Actually, the thing sits next to my usual chair, and I kind of do. But I do tend to have moments and little periods of time during the day when suddenly I'll pick up the guitar and something will come to mind. I sit around writing songs, basically, or parts of songs, little bits.

Today's Stones shows are massive tribal gatherings. Have you considered the possibility that these sort of events might not be possible in the foreseeable future? And if so, is there a plan B under consideration?
At the moment, I can't see any plan B coming. At the moment I think it's all based on 'Let's get this thing over and done with as soon as possible. Let's smarten up and…' This thing is designed to keep us apart, and everything we want to do is be together. I think we're all going to have to bite the bullet for a bit and hunker down, do as we're told, wash our hands, wear our masks and do the best.

Is the forthcoming Stones album likely to be released track by track, because that seems to be working well so far?
Well, *(Living In A) Ghost Town* came out that way, and we got about four or five tracks down before the pandemic hit. *Ghost Town* was written and recorded before we knew anything about covid-19. It was one of Mick's really mysterious prophecies [laughs]. But otherwise? I don't know. We can't finish it until we can get back together again, and this pandemic might change the way we want to sound or what we want to write about, because I think it's going to influence everything.

You're renowned for keeping quite the library. What have you read during the pandemic?
Funnily enough, not a lot. For some reason I haven't been able to settle down with anything. Actually, thanks for reminding me. I must catch up on what people are writing. I haven't read anything new just lately, and I usually do. I think this pandemic has slowed me down or cut me off somewhat.

Christmas and Keithmas are coming [Keith's seventy-seventh birthday is on December 18]. Have you got anything planned?
We were wondering whether to escape to the islands for Christmas, but I'm really leaving it to the family to see how they feel. But I have a feeling that it's going to be the Christmas tree in the snow – keep it traditional – and then go down to the islands.

Keith Richards And The X-Pensive Winos Live At The Hollywood Palladium is out now via BMG.

SHUTTERSTOCK

THE ULTIMATE PLAYLIST OF 2020

Looking for the perfect soundtrack to accompany your Christmas and New Year festivities? Then start with *Classic Rock*'s selection.

Words: **Henry Yates**, **Polly Glass**, **Siân Llewellyn**

ICONS & A-LISTERS

Big hitters from rock's big cheeses.

AC/DC
Realize

In an unsettling world, the return of AC/DC felt like an arm around the shoulder. Nobody wanted curve balls, and *Realize* broke negligible new ground, sticking with the stomp-'n'-chant template and a vintage shriek from Brian Johnson.

DEEP PURPLE
No Need To Shout

Ian Gillan has never sounded snarkier than on this "broad pop at politicians", and the music seethed too, with Steve Morse driving a snakey riff that you couldn't believe Jimmy Page hadn't already written.

PEARL JAM
Dance Of The Clairvoyants

'Save your predictions, and burn your assumptions' sings a David Byrne-channelling Eddie Vedder over a naggingly funky bass line punctuated by vicious guitar stabs. Never truer words sung as PJ surprised us with this itchy pop groove.

FISH
Weltschmerz

The optimistic chimed verse of *Weltschmerz* clouded over into a distinctly stormier chorus. Saluting the next generation as humanity's best shot at salvation, and closing what could be Fish's final album, it's hard to imagine a better full stop.

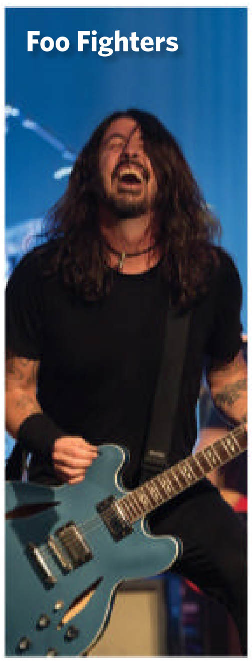
ALTER BRIDGE
Last Rites

Written over lockdown, *Last Rites* finds Myles Kennedy raging about saying *'goodbye to the only way of life you've known'* while Mark Tremonti's guitar is more brutal than it's been in a long time.

FOO FIGHTERS
Shame Shame

Dave Grohl has teased next year's *Medicine At Midnight* as "our Saturday night party album", but *Shame Shame* is no standard-issue mosher, coming out of left field with twitchy beats and Bowie-ish judders.

AC/DC


Foo Fighters

Fantastic Negrito

OZZY OSBOURNE
It's A Raid

Any notion of Ozzy creaking towards retirement was nixed by this unhinged thrasher alongside Post Malone. Raging, hollering and cussing, the 72-year-old Prince Of Darkness sounded more deranged than he had in decades.

FAT GROOVES & FUNKY STUFF

Floor fillers, party choons...

PATRÓN
Who Do You Dance For?

This strutting, sexy brainchild of these 'desert lounge punk' mavericks (featuring QOTSA, Kyuss and Danzig alumni) has one of the fattest grooves we've heard in years, while lead vocals are deliciously wicked and deeper than the Pacific.

ROYAL BLOOD
Trouble's Coming

Trouble's Coming nailed frontman Mike Kerr's shot at a more danceable third album, splicing the groove of a New York fetish club with stabbed riffs that felt like Angus Young hijacking Matt Bellamy's pedal board. It worked a treat.

FANTASTIC NEGRITO
Chocolate Samurai

The opening track from Xavier Dphrepaulezz's latest album is lip-smackingly tasty. Fun, funky and built on a guitar hook that calls to mind Stevie Wonder's *Higher Ground*, *Chocolate Samurai* will have you shaking your hips and tapping your toes even if you have no natural rhythm whatsoever.

THE CADILLAC THREE
Road Soda

The Nashville dream team roll back the clock to the 70s, unleash their inner James Brown and borrow a few tricks from Bruno Mars's *Uptown Funk* on this highlight from *Tabasco & Sweet Tea*. Just try *not* to bob your head along to this one – you will fail.

ORANGE GOBLIN
The Devil's Whip (live)

Let's be real: it ain't no rock party without a bit of OG. Happily, they released a live record this year (the aptly titled *Rough & Ready, Live & Loud*) from which this hairy, glorious beast is taken. Play it loud!

DANGEREENS
Streets Of Doom

Punky, scuzzy and accompanied by a video that found the pissed-up Canadians piloting their own private jet, *Streets Of Doom* was the best New York Dolls steal we've heard in decades. If they get down in one piece, they could be massive.

KING KING
Dance Together

In a year when dancing together was not allowed, the Scots' most groove-driven single to date made us desperately miss the hot crush of the security bar. All optimism, no irony, it felt like the sun was always out when it played.

MAVERICKS & PROTEST SONGS

Because 2020 hasn't exactly been short of fuel.

STEVE EARLE & THE DUKES
It's About Blood

The fulcrum of Earle's concept album about an explosion at a Virginia coal mine,

It's About Blood nailed the details of the tragedy – like the wives of the fallen waking up alone in bed – and built from a benign country twang to a stark outro, with Earle shouting out each dead man's name.

CELISSE HENDERSON
Freedom

Watching a slew of young African-Americans shot dead by police in 2016, Henderson wrote *Freedom*. And when George Floyd was killed in May, she knew "this is the time". Buzzing with slow-burn intent and blossoming into a gospel climax, it's music that matters.

THE DOWLING POOLE
Fuck You Goodbye

It doesn't take a genius to deduce the inspiration behind this dulcet, prettily harmonised track from Willie Dowling and Jon Poole. Let's just say he is a lot less sweet (and more orange) than the Jellyfish-come-XTC power-pop at work here.

HAWXX
Dogma

With Hawxx having previously ragged on organised religion and NHS funding, *Dogma* found the London polemicists skewering the unattainable, male-driven ideals of modern femininity, with Anna Papadimitriou deriding the *'leeches on our skin'* over thrash-monster guitars.

DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS
The New OK

Few musicians have jabbed Trump harder this year than Patterson Hood ("I would vote for Bush right now if it'd get that motherfucker out of there"). But this impossibly wistful, bruised-but-unbowed title track from the Georgia band's thirteenth album proved that protest songs can be thoughtful, not just spitting-mad.

THE OBGMS
Fight Song

Granted, Densil McFarlane's lip is so ridiculously curled that you can barely catch a word, but that only adds to the primal power on this clattering gem from these Canadians' latest album/manifesto, *The Ends*. Keep your polished satire, we'll take *Fight Song*'s guttural fury.

THE BLINDERS
Lunatic With A Loaded Gun

The opening reference to *'children in cages on Monday's front pages'* announced which particular despot these Manchester-based alt.rockers had in their sights. But *Lunatic* was far more than Trump-baiting, with Thomas Haywood's bared-teeth vocals sounding like a man about to ram-raid the Oval Office.

SINGALONGS & SUGAR RUSHES

When only the catchiest, sweetest things will do.

SILVER SUN
Fireworks

Tragically, frontman James Broad checked out in October, but not before giving us one last flash of his melodic genius with *Fireworks*. Driven by funk-rock bass, stop-start drums and a guitar hook like the Foos' *Monkey Wrench* with sugar on top, it couldn't have been more full of life.

TYLER BRYANT & THE SHAKEDOWN
Crazy Days

Bryant wrote this in March, when the prospect of returning to normality still felt at least vaguely tangible. Clearly that hopefulness ignited a spark, because this might be his best track yet. It's like hearing the buzzy, bluesy prodigal son of Aerosmith, all spread wings and chant-along chorus.

JIM KIRKPATRICK
Ballad Of A Prodigal Son

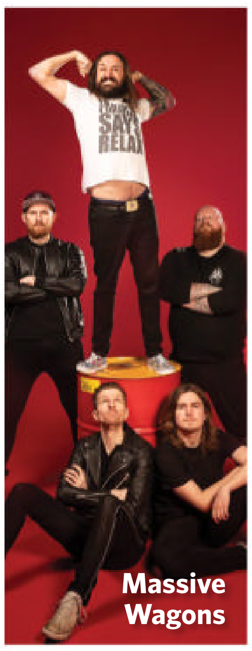
FM's lead guitarist proves himself to be a dab hand at singing – not to mention nailing an absolute killer chorus and verses to match – on this blues-rocking title track from his solo album. It had us at the first lick.

THE STRUTS
I Hate How Much I Want You

Def Leppard's Joe Elliott doesn't get out of bed for just any old guest vocal, but The Struts' best single to date boasted an instant-classic vocal hook so full-hearted that it offset the rocketing covid graphs. Hear it once, hum it for eternity.

JOYOUS WOLF
Odyssey

More erudite than your average Cali rockers, Joyous Wolf cited Homer's epic poem as the inspiration for this tale of "hope through the turbulence". But you didn't need a degree in Greek mythology to appreciate the chunky roots-rock churn and a vocal that filled the sails.


Massive Wagons

Neil Young

Crown Lands

Christopher Shayne

MASSIVE WAGONS
In It Together

The title might sound trite on paper. But with the covid shit-storm raging outside, *In It Together* felt like a people's anthem, with its chin up and one eye on the stadiums that the Lancastrian band might soon be playing after another breakthrough year.

CATS IN SPACE
I Fell Out Of Love With Rock And Roll

The crowning glory from their new album *Atlantis* packs in more immaculately executed glitz than most rock bands would dare to even contemplate. The sound of Queen, Jim Steinman and Supertramp combined, with the best of the West End at their disposal. So wrong. So right.

ROOTSY TUNES & BADASS BLUES

Right outta Nashville and beyond.

NEIL YOUNG & CRAZY HORSE
Be The Rain (Live)

The kinda forgettable closer to 2003's *Greendale* always kicked harder live, and when Young raided the vaults for November's *Return To Greendale* this 2003 performance from Toronto was powerful and prescient (*'Don't care what the governments say, they're all bought an' paid for anyway'*).

BROTHERS OSBORNE
Hatin' Somebody

Part Little Feat-esque boogie, part countrified ode to being a decent human being, this sunshiney single from John and TJ Osborne will make you want to hug your friends *and* your enemies. Well, when social distancing guidelines allow it, anyway.

CROWN LANDS
Spit It Out

Opening up the Ontario duo's debut album – and shaking off the pretty-boy image – *Spit It Out* was a grade-A alt.blues bone shaker, complete with electric-shock slide guitar and animal howls. A few more like this and they'll steal Jack White's crown.

CHRISTOPHER SHAYNE
Any Given Sunday

Arizona-born desert blues renegade Shayne was a new discovery this year, pricking up our ears (and putting huge grins on our faces) with this moreish, organ-blasting tale of lusting after a girl, in church, while hungover. ▷

NEIL YOUNG: ALAMY; MASSIVE WAGONS: JOHN MCMURTRIE; CROWN LANDS: TRAVIS SHINN

JASON ISBELL & THE 400 UNIT

Be Afraid

Alabama-born country star Isbell has bloomed into a tremendous songwriting force, and the best song from *Reunions* is a haunted anthem encouraging his peers to speak up for injustice or be damned to irrelevance.

THE TEXAS GENTLEMEN

Ain't Nothing New

Another tip of the hat to Little Feat. Gorgeous harmonies, swampy guitars, tempo changes, warming brass and organ lines… Seldom has a band in recent years sounded this loose and been this tight.

LARKIN POE

Back Down South

This scuttle-riffed blues shout saluted the Lovell sisters' formative years below the Mason-Dixon Line, and expressed their preference for reincarnation instead of an afterlife beyond the pearly gates.

THE BYSON FAMILY

Hope And Pray

Not since the sozzled days of the Faces has a session sounded more fun than these Glaswegians' second single. It's a candid rave-up of sniggers, whoops, banter, happy-handed piano, twanged soul guitar and a solid-gold chorus.

EARWORMS & HUGE BANGERS

Conquer the world with this lot.

GINGER

Meet My Killer

As he continued to excavate his bottomless pit of great songs, Ginger Wildheart fused the year's most head-in-hands lyric (*'Sobriety is killing me, it's fucking me up/Reality, you'll be my killer'*) with a melodic crunch that frogmarched you out of the doldrums.

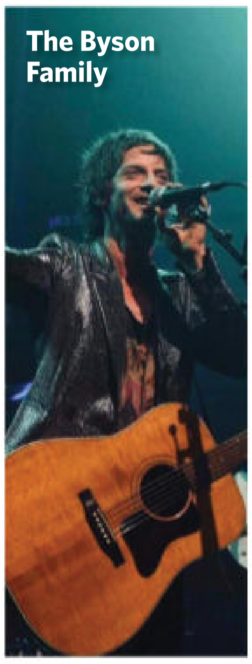
PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS

Son Of A Gun

Campbell tells us he'll always have a little Motörhead in his DNA. And with his sons playing out of their skin on *Son Of A Gun* you can imagine Lemmy signing off on this galloping second-album highlight.

H.e.a.t

Larkin Poe


The Byson Family

Phil Campbell

H.E.A.T

Dangerous Ground

It seems that no one has told these melodic-rocking Swedes that it isn't 1986 any more. If *Dangerous Ground* – complete with guitar riffs, glass-shattering vocal shrieks and *Danger Zone* oomph – is anything to go by, then we hope they never do. Joey Tempest (and Kenny Loggins) would be proud.

TUK SMITH & THE RESTLESS HEARTS

Looking For Love (Ready For War)

The former Biters frontman calls this song "my own personal anthem", setting out his manifesto to plough on through the rock scene's obstacles, come stadiums or shit creek. Based on its charging guitars and soaring chorus, bet on the former.

AUSTIN GOLD

You Got It All

Peterborough four-piece Austin Gold found a beefy sweet spot between the Foo Fighters and Bad Company on *You Got It All*, with singer/guitarist David James Smith channeling Dave Grohl and Paul Rodgers in one of his most commanding performances yet.

PALAYE ROYALE

Anxiety

With these Las Vegas dandies growing more politicised with age,with their third album *The Bastards* they weren't afraid to ask the big questions. And they nailed the nation's unravelling mental health with *Anxiety*'s claustrophobic beat-down. For the full sensory assault, skip Spotify and watch the *Mad Max*-style video.

BUFFALO SUMMER

If Walls Could Speak

We saw these Welsh rockers playing this live in London just before covid-19 came along and slammed shut venues' doors. And we're glad we did; all the potential of their heavy southern-come-grunge rock sound explodes in this arse-kicking, collar-grabbing rock'n'roller. Catchy as hell too.

SKAM

Green Eyes

With burbling thrash riffs, lyrics that underlined the inherent pointlessness of jealousy, and a seething outro expressly designed by the band to "melt faces", the Leicester trio's latest single dethroned *Take It Or Leave It* as their best track.

ALT.ROCK, PROG & WEIRD SHIT

Prime left-field cuts and atmospheric choices.

STEVEN WILSON

Personal Shopper

Like many artists, Wilson's latest album has been pushed back to 2021. But he kept us hooked with this dark love letter to 21st-century consumerism. Another compelling twist in his career, it makes us think of Trent Reznor at an EDM night – with Elton John popping in to read out his shopping list. Yes, really.

THE PINEAPPLE THIEF

Versions Of The Truth

Bruce Soord's vision just keeps getting more widescreen, and this, the title track of his thirteenth album, was ambitious even by prog's lofty standards. Shape-shifting from a hushed, marimba-decorated dreamscape to an epic sonic cyclone, *Versions Of The Truth* offered a much-needed trip as the world locked down.

THE POSIES

Sideways

One of the most tragically underrated bands around, The Posies make the sort of sweet, smart alt.rock/pop songs that ought to be classics but never seem to make it that far. This dreamy number is a case in point, a sun-kissed medicine for bad days and turbulent times.

TIM BOWNESS

Northern Rain

The veteran songwriter's pulsing electro-rock ballad was stunning enough out of context. But when you learned of *Northern Rain*'s true message – "about a person seeing their partner slowly descend into the fog of dementia" – it became almost unbearably poignant.

AMY MONTGOMERY

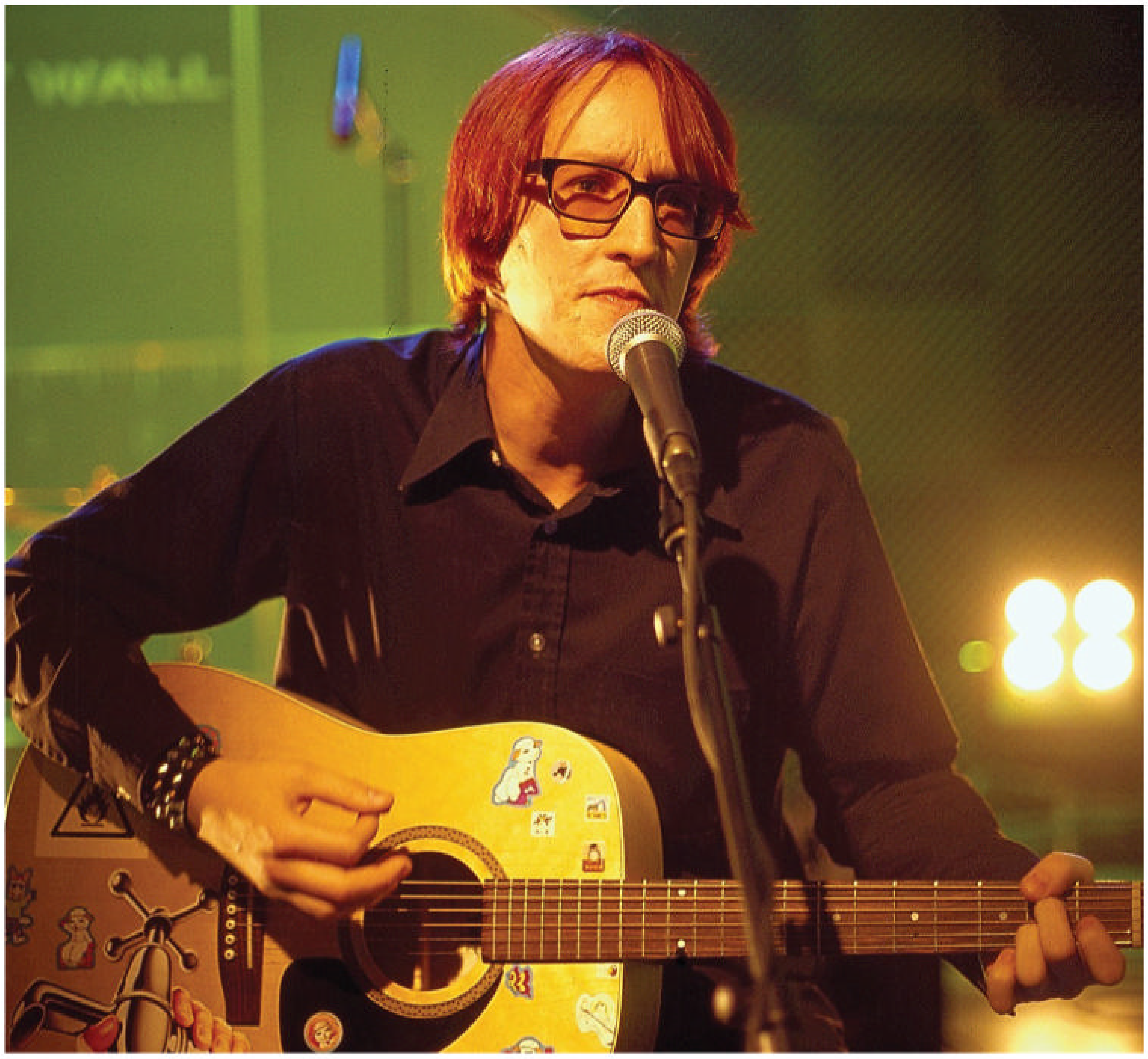
Anywhere

Irish singer-songwriter Montgomery has a worldly, enigmatic head on her 21-year-old shoulders. There are touches of Alanis Morissette, Zero 7-era Sia and Tori Amos in *Anywhere*, but with a depth that falls somewhere between 70s counterculture and Montgomery's own magical mystery land.

EMPYRE

The Only Way Out (acoustic)

In a year when the last thing we needed was more bombast and bluster, Northampton rockers Empyre got the memo. They stripped the best track from their album *Self Aware* to its nucleus, and discovered a dark, graceful ballad in which a Steinway grand piano conjured more power than a Marshall stack.



FROM DAWN TO DUSK

After a bright start with his band Silver Sun's debut album, followed by more records filled with sparkling power pop, in 2020 **James Broad** gave us his final masterpiece.

Words: **Mark Beaumont**

As new dawns go, Silver Sun flooded in. When their lush, soothing, multi-vocal-harmonied intro to *Lava* erupted into a frenzy of guitars and falsetto rock squeals, it was like the curtains snapping open on a supernova. The post-peak death throes of Britpop often deserved their inauspicious reputation; here lay innumerable bad Oasis-copyist major-label cash-in merchants. But among them were some truly great acts: Super Furry Animals, Ash, Mansun and London's Silver Sun,whose debut album ranked alongside the very best of the decade. Their singer, James Broad, died in October from cancer.

Announcing their arrival with the self-aggrandising punk assault of *There Will Never Be Another Me* from their debut *Sun..!* EP, Silver Sun marked a vibrant swerve for Britpop. As indebted to the emo rock of Weezer, the classic rock'n'roll of Buddy Holly, the power pop of Cheap Trick and The Beach Boys' lustrous harmonies as they were to Supergrass or Ash, they represented the Britpop era reaching out across the Atlantic every bit as boldly as Blur's grunge-influenced self-titled album of 1997. That same year, their debut album *Silver Sun* arrived, adorned with B-movie poster artwork and sounding like a time-travelling DeLorean scorching across a 1950s American drive-in.

From the chrome-plated, fuel-injected guitar-pop charges of *Golden Skin* and *Last Day* to joyous retro swingers like *Julia* and cheese-free power ballads *Far Out*, *Yellow Light* and showstopper *Nobody*, the record was virtually faultless, a shining beacon of melodic excellence in a British rock scene becoming increasingly formulaic and cannibalistic. That such impeccable melodies came attached to some of the most cartoonish and surreal lyrics of the age – sneaking the line *'bull's blood for baby Jesus'* into the charts on *Lava*, and making a piano ballad about animals trampling on drugs (*Animal's Feet*) far more moving than it deserved to be – only made the record feel as not-of-this-planet as the monster beetle on its sleeve.

Silver Sun made several dents in the charts, hitting No.30 and sending *Golden Skin* and *Lava* into the Top 40, although their biggest hits came the following year with their sleek cover of Johnny Vallins's *Too Much, Too Little, Too Late* and ballroom blitzer *I'll See You Around*. Second album *Neo Wave*, however, despite some wonderful moments such as *Scared*, *There Goes Summer* and *Mustard*, leaned a little too heavily on Cheap Trick's glam rock, lacked the debut's effervescent crispness and saw the band enter a seven-year hiatus.

However, they remained a close-knit family with effortless chemistry. In 2002, as an avid fan and friend of the band, I talked James, bassist Richard Buckton and guitarist Paul Smith into re-forming to play in my back garden for my thirtieth birthday party, the first time they'd played together in several years. After just an hour's rehearsal in my bedroom their harmonic magic clicked like they'd never set foot off tour.

The following year they played sporadic shows, and in 2005 Broad recorded a third Silver Sun album, *Disappear Here*. Despite him playing all of the instruments himself (his bandmates reunited again for the accompanying gigs), the album bristled with the raucous rock'n'roll momentum of their debut on tracks such as *Bubblegum* and *Lies*, and delved into electronica on the single *Immediate*. An equally mighty full-band album, *Dad's Weird Dream*, followed in 2006, adding traces of psychedelia, ska and Pinkerton grunge to their power-pop mix. After that, bar 2013 album *A Lick And A Promise*, compiling Silver Sun tracks Broad had recorded over the previous decade, little more was heard of the Britpop Beach Boys.

Activity recommenced in recent years. In 2017 I caught up with the band, in great spirits after a comeback gig at Islington Academy. A sixth album, *Switzerland*, again recorded entirely by Broad, was released early in 2020. Further exploring the grungier elements of *Dad's Weird Dream*, it showed no sign of deterioration in his melodic mastery – nor his encroaching illness.

Just weeks before his death in October 2020, fans were shocked to read ex-*Kerrang!* editor James McMahon's interview with Broad, for his personal website, in which he revealed he was battling terminal cancer. "I probably have about four years max left, unless someone comes up with something pretty impressive soon to fix me up," he said. "I am learning to live with that fact… I don't really worry about myself as such. It's hard to worry about something you really don't have any control over… I try and stay pretty positive."

Positivity, after all, was James Broad's musical forte; every gig a celebration, every song a punch at the stars. For many of us, his music opened the door and let the light in. ●

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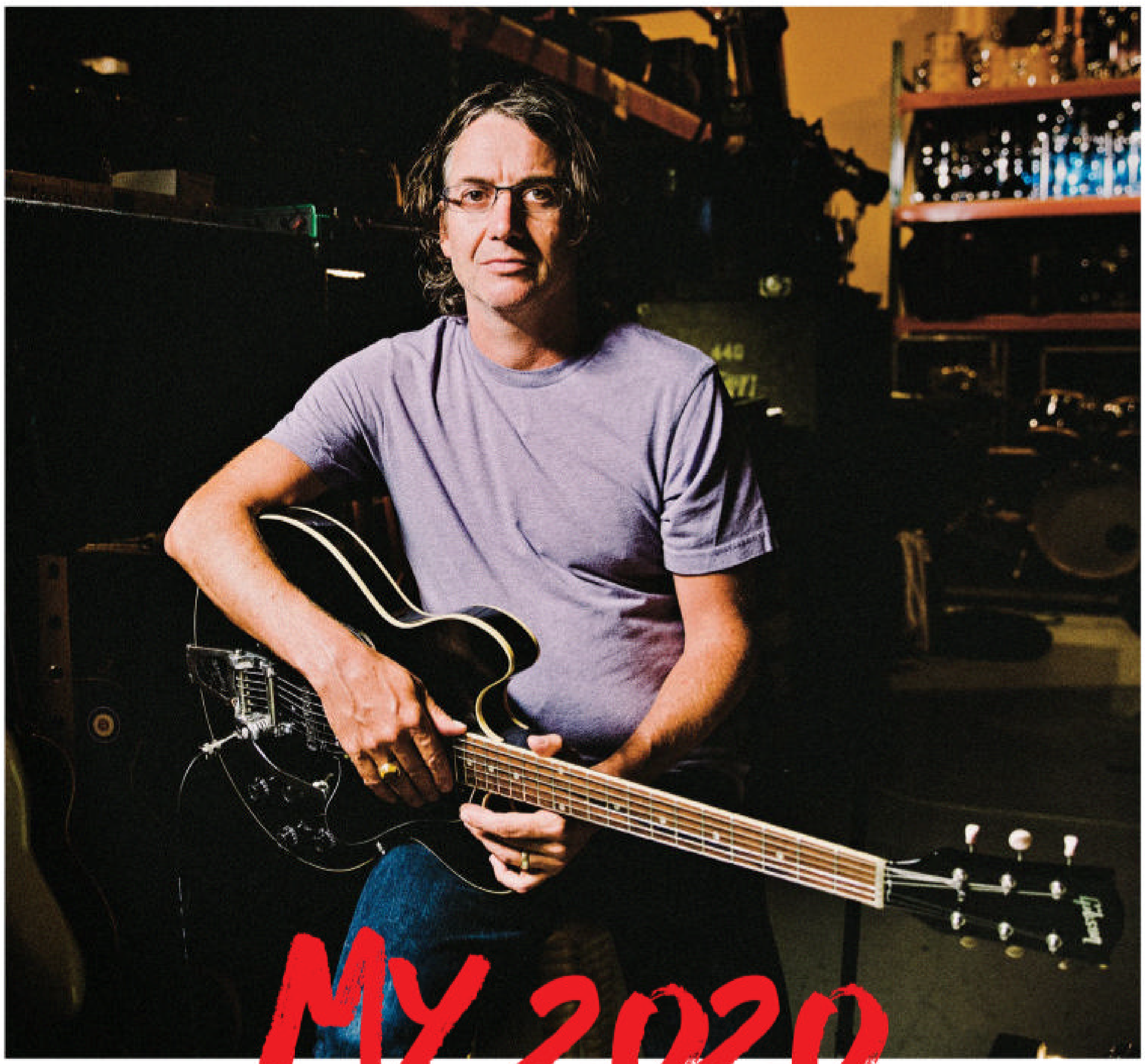


My 2020 STONE GOSSARD

The Pearl Jam guitarist was due to spend 2020 on tour, but ended up at home. Now with a new band in the works, he looks back on a year of music, politics and heavy-duty parenting.

Interview: **Henry Yates**

And it was all going so well, sighs Stone Gossard. Back in March, Pearl Jam were all set to detonate *Gigaton*: a Trump-baiting eleventh studio album that would have shaken the stadiums on that month's North American tour. But then the real bombshell landed, sending the 54-year-old guitarist into a world of enforced domesticity and screwball comedies. Now gearing up for the release of his debut record with Painted Shield, Gossard fills us in.

How did you find the response to *Gigaton*?
Well, the band always gets the good news. I think we got decent reviews, and fans were generally excited. I didn't write the lyrics, so I don't know what Ed [Vedder] would say about the album's message. But I think in Pearl Jam, the message is always that it's a band. Y'know, you share with your brothers, and it's not always an easy ride, but you gotta keep coming back to the table. I think people connect to the idea that it's the same group of guys from thirty years ago, still tinkering and figuring it out.

***Quick Escape* and *Seven O'Clock* took pretty vicious potshots at Trump…**
I think Ed was pretty measured with his criticism of Trump, and if anything, he was probably leaning towards not inflaming the situation.

The election result must have been good news?
Well, is there good news about the election? It just keeps going on and on. It's like, Trump has got the soccer ball, and he's over on the sideline, but he's refusing to give the ball back and everybody is afraid to tell him the game's over. At what point is he just a giant crybaby? And he has millions of people that connect with him. How do you find a middle-ground with something so polarised? I'm happy in general that Biden won. I mean, we didn't do nearly as well in the Congressional seats and Senate seats, so it's gonna be difficult for Biden to do much of anything, other than just hang on.

How did it feel to cancel the Gigaton tour?
It was hard. We were chomping at the bit, ready to go. I think we had one rehearsal left. But we're a rich rock band with insurance policies. We're in a better situation than 99.9% of folks. Anyone who works in the restaurant business or anything to do with public spaces – it's brutal out there. For us, it's not the same as if I was 22, and had a band just about to release their first record. I mean, that would be horrible. There could be nothing worse than that. Just trying to restart your momentum…

Is your gut feeling that you'll make it to Hyde Park next summer?
I hope so. Right now, the news is not great. Y'know, Europe was supposed to be handling this like adults, and it's still an issue. I'm hoping for good news in the next few months, where cases are really significantly going down, and there's enough vaccine filtering out. I just don't know if the world is ever going to be the same. But we're on the books for Hyde Park. We wanna go.

Have you learnt any new skills during lockdown?
You know what I'm really good at right now? Picking up stuff after my kids. Doing the dishes. It's been so busy, between finishing the album with my new band, Painted Shield, and working on Loosegroove, this label I'm running with my friend Regan Hagar. And just keeping the kids fed and snacked. Y'know, my wife is managing their Zoom calls, but it definitely takes a village. I did get a chance to watch the new Will Ferrell movie, *Eurovision Song Contest*, which just charmed me so much. I highly recommend it. It's a lark.

Which musician's death hit you hardest this year?
I knew Eddie Van Halen had been battling cancer for a long time, so I was shocked, but I wasn't totally shocked that he had passed away. I don't think there was a better live music experience, just in terms of hitting all the marks of bringing people together, totally joyous, groovy, light-hearted, whimsical. Van Halen were the greatest live rock band of all time, I'd venture to say.

What's the first thing you'll do once the pandemic is over?
My wife and I would love to get away from our kids for about a week. And I love my kids. They're the greatest. They're so hilarious. But we've not had more than an hour to just reconnect and be adults. We're doing adult management, as opposed to being in love.

"My wife and I would love to get away from our kids for a week!"

What needs to happen for rock'n'roll to be saved?
Luckily, rock'n'roll is all about your own entrepreneurial concepts. It's wide open. There are as many opportunities as barriers. So the bands that are optimistic in terms of seeing opportunities that weren't there before – they'll be the ones that pave the way for whatever's next.

Painted Shield's self-titled debut is out November 27 on Loosegroove. Read more about them in the next issue of Classic Rock.

DANNY CLINCH/PRESS

IN MEMORIAM

Here's to the rock'n'rollers, among them musicians, producers, writers and more, who sadly left us in 2020. Thank you for the music.

NEIL PEART
September 12, 1952 – January 7, 2020
Drummer and lyricist with Rush

DAVID ROBACK
April 4, 1958 – February 24, 2020
Singer/guitarist with American alt.rockers Mazzy Star

MARTIN GRIFFIN
September 15, 1949 – January 6, 2020
Drummer with Hawkwind and the Hawklords

CHRIS DARROW
July 30, 1944 – January 15, 2020
Multi-instrumentalist with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band

ANDY GILL
January 1, 1956 – February 1, 2020
Gang Of Four guitarist and noted record producer

IVAN KRÁL
May 12, 1948 – February 2, 2020
Former guitar player with the Patti Smith Group

KELV HELLRAZER
September 8, 1963 – March 2020
Journalist and UK glam scene stalwart

WES WILSON
July 15, 1937 – January 24, 2020
Designer with iconic gig posters in the 1960s

BOB SHANE
February 1, 1934 – January 26, 2020
Singer and guitarist with US folkers the Kingston Trio

REED MULLIN
February 12, 1966 – January 27, 2020
Co-founding drummer of Corrosion Of Conformity

GENESIS P-ORRIDGE
February 22, 1950 – March 14, 2020
Founder of Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV

STEVE PRIEST
February 23, 1948 – June 4, 2020
Co-founder and bassist of the Sweet

SEAN REINERT
May 27, 1971 – January 24, 2020
Drummer with Death and Cynic

BUDDY CAGE
February 18, 1946 – February 5, 2020
Pedal steel guitarist with New Riders Of The Purple Sage

MIKEY LAWLESS
March 16, 1988 – January 3, 2019
Bass player with Falling Red

RON THOMPSON
July 5, 1953 – February 15, 2020
Californian bluesman

ANDREW WEATHERALL
April 6, 1963 – February 17, 2020
Record producer and DJ

KEITH OLSEN
Died March 7, 2020
American record producer

PHIL PHILLIPS
March 14, 1926 – March 14, 2020
American singer-songwriter

JASON RAINEY
February 14, 1967 – March 16, 2020
Former guitarist with US thrashers Sacred Reich

KENNY ROGERS
August 21, 1938 – March 20, 2020
Iconic country music singer

JULIE FELIX
June 14, 1938 – March 22, 2020
Britain's first lady of folk

MATT TAYLOR
Died March 23, 2020
British blues guitarist/singer

BILL RIEFLIN
September 29, 1960 – March 24, 2020
Drummer with King Crimson, R.E.M., Ministry and NIN

ALAN MERRILL
February 19, 1951 – March 29, 2020
Singer, guitarist, songwriter, actor and writer of *I Love Rock'N'Roll*

ADAM SHLESINGER
October 31, 1967 – April 1, 2020
Singer and multi-instrumentalist with Fountains Of Wayne

ROBIN GREATREX
June 26, 1950 – April 10, 2020
London-based manager and record label boss

WILLIAM 'BUCKY' BAXTER
Died May 25, 2020
Pedal steel guitarist with Bob Dylan's band

MICHAEL APPLETON
Died April 2, 2020
Producer and editor of *The Old Grey Whistle Test*

JOHN PRINE
October 10, 1946 – April 7, 2020
Grammy-winning American country-folk singer

HAL WILLNER
April 6, 1956 – April 7, 2020
Producer of Lou Reed, Metallica, Marianne Faithfull

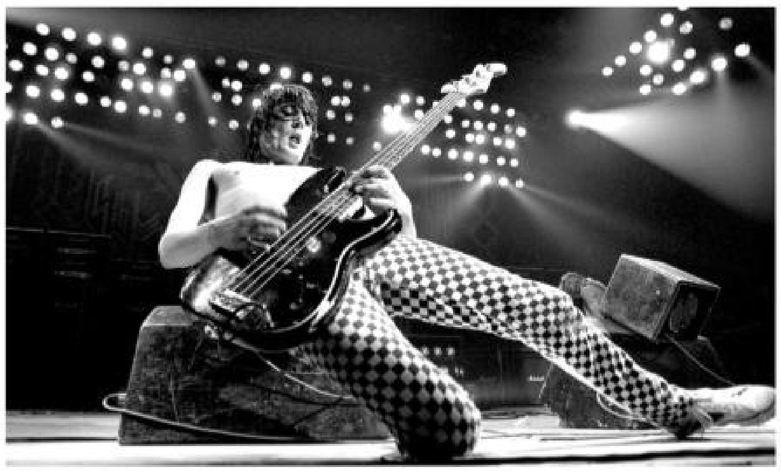
BUCKY PIZZARELLI
January 9, 1926 – April 1, 2020
Veteran US jazz guitarist

BILL WITHERS
July 4, 1938 – March 30, 2020
Soul singer and musician

RONAN O'RAHILLY
May 21, 1940 – April 20, 2020
Founder of pirate radio station Radio Caroline

DAVID GREENFIELD
March 29, 1949 – May 3, 2020
Keyboard player with The Stranglers

LEN FAGAN
Died May 3, 2020
Former drummer with Love



PETE WAY
August 7, 1950 – August 14, 2020
Bassist with UFO, Waysted, Ozzy, Fastway and more

STEVE FARMER
December 31, 1948 – April 7, 2020
Former guitarist with the Amboy Dukes

BIG GEORGE BROCK
May 16, 1932 – April 10, 2020
Mississippi harmonica bluesman to the stars

KENNY YOUNG
April 14, 1941 – April 14, 2020
Grammy-winning American songwriter

BRIAN HOWE
July 22, 1953 – May 6, 2020
Former Bad Company and Ted Nugent frontman

ROY WILLIAMS
Died April 29, 2020
Robert Plant's long-serving sound engineer

JOHN McKENZIE
November 10, 1955 – May 10, 2020
Bassist for Bowie, Dylan and others

JOEY IMAGE
March 5, 1957 – June 1, 2020
Former drummer with the Misfits

MOON MARTIN
October 31, 1945 – May 11, 2020
Quirky American singer-songwriter

DEREK LAWRENCE
November 16, 1941 – May 13, 2020
Producer of Deep Purple and Wishbone Ash

PHIL MAY
November 9, 1944 – May 15, 2020
Frontman with The Pretty Things

JOHNNY NASH
August 19, 1940 – October 6, 2020
Texas-born reggae star

PETE WAY: ROSS HALFIN; GETTY x2

MATTHEW SELIGMAN
July 14, 1955 – April 17, 2020
Former bassist with the Camera Club and the Soft Boys

GENE SHAY
March 4, 1935 – April 17, 2020
DJ and founder of Philadelphia Folk Festival

JIMMY CAPPS
May 25, 1939 – June 2, 2020
American country-rock guitarist

FLORIAN SCHNEIDER
April 7, 1947 – April 21, 2020
Co-founder, vocalist and multi-instrumentalist with Kraftwerk

TRINI LOPEZ
May 15, 1937 – August 11, 2020
American singer, guitarist and actor

RUPERT HINE
September 21, 1947 – June 4, 2020
Producer of Rush, Stevie Nicks, Saga and more

AL REX
July 13, 1928 – May 24, 2020
Bassist with Bill Haley & Comets

ENNIO MORRICONE
No vember 10, 1928 – July 6, 2020
Veteran Italian film composer

KEITH TIPPETT
August 25, 1947 – June 14, 2020
Jazz pianist with King Crimson affiliations

TIM SMITH
July 3, 1961 – July 21, 2020
Frontman for Cardiacs

SALLY CATO
Died May 19, 2020
Singer with Smashed Gladys

BOB KULICK
January 16, 1950 – May 29, 2020
Guitarist for Kiss, Meat Loaf, W.A.S.P. and more

KEN 'MR CHI PIG' CHINN
October 19, 1962 – July 16, 2020
Singer with Canadian punks SNFU

CHARLIE DANIELS
October 28, 1936 – July 6, 2020
Pioneer of southern rock

CHRIS 'CP' LEE
January 19, 1950 – July 25, 2020
Singer and guitarist with Alberto Y Lost Trios Paranoias

TERRY QUIRK
June 22, 1941 – June 1, 2020
Artist for The Zombies' album *Odessey And Oracle*

SID McCRAY
Died September 9, 2020
Original frontman with DC hard-core pioneers the Bad Brains

SEAN TYLA
August 3, 1946 – May 17, 2020
Britain's Godfather of pub-rock boogie

LITTLE RICHARD
December 5, 1932 – May 9, 2020
The architect of rock'n'roll

JUDY DYBLE
February 13, 1949 – July 12, 20201
Vocalist with Fairport Convention and Trader Horne

PAUL CHAPMAN
June 9, 1954 – June 9, 2020
Former Lone Star, UFO and Waysted guitarist

JAMIE OLDAKER
September 5, 1951 – July 16, 2020
Drummer for Eric Clapton, Bob Seger, Leon Russell and more

ROY HEAD
January 9, 1941 – September 21, 2020
Texan-born rock'n'soul singer

TONY CONSTANZA
July 2, 1968 – August 4, 2020
Original drummer with Machine Head

JOHN MEYER
Died September 1, 2020
Former slide guitarist with Rose Tattoo

DENISE JOHNSON
July 31, 1963 - July 27, 2020
Vocalist with Primal Scream, New Order and more

SIR ALAN PARKER
February 14, 1944 – July 31, 2020
Director of Pink Floyd's film version of *The Wall*

JIM MAY
Died August 2020
Former guitarist with US hard rockers Legs Diamond

STEVE HOLLAND
February 2, 1954 – August 2, 2020
Original guitarist with southern rockers Molly Hatchet

MARK STONE
Died September 26, 2020
Van Halen's original bassist

WAYNE FONTANA
28 October 1945 – 6 August 2020
Singer with The Mindbenders

MARTIN BIRCH
December 27, 1948 – August 9, 2020
Producer of Iron Maiden, Black Sabbath, Wishbone Ash and more

PAT FAIRLEY
April 14, 1943 – August 11, 2020
Former bassist with pop-rock band Marmalade

PETE HAWARTH
July 7, 1957 – August 12, 2020
Guitarist with Jersey-based NWOBHM band Legend

JACK SHERMAN
January 18, 1956 – August 18, 2020
Second guitarist with the Red Hot Chilli Peppers

RON HEATHMAN
Died August 18, 2020
Former guitarist with Arizona rock'n'rollers The Supersuckers

DENNY DEMARCHI
November 28, 1962 – May 15, 2020
Keyboard player with Canadian AOR band Alias

LYLE MAYS
November 27, 1953 – February 10, 2020
Keyboard player with the Pat Metheny Group

FRANKIE BANALI
November 14, 1951 – August 20, 2020
Drummer with Quiet Riot and W.A.S.P.

WALTER LURE
April 22, 1949 – August 22, 2020
Former guitarist with Johnny Thunders & The Heartbreakers

JUSTIN TOWNES EARLE
January 4, 1982 – August 23, 2020
Singer-songwriter

RILEY GALE
May 2, 1985 – August 24, 2020
Singer with Texan heavyweights Power Trip

GERRY MCGEE
August 15, 1962 – August 25, 2020
Frontman with Canadian hard rockers Brighton Rock

TOOTS HIBBERT
December 8, 1942 – September 11, 2020
Stones-approved reggae musician

FLOYD LEE
August 20, 1933 – June 7, 2020
Veteran Mississippi bluesman

PETER STARKIE
Died September 13, 2020
Original guitarist with Aussie rockers Skyhooks

DAVE KUSWORTH
March 26, 1960 – September 19, 2020
Staple of Birmingham's garage glam-rock'n'roll scene

PETER GREEN
October 29, 1946 – July 25, 2020
Fleetwood Mac founder and guitarist-singer-songwriter

TODD NANCE
November 20, 1962 – August 19, 2020
Drummer with southern rock jam band Widespread Panic

TOMMY DEVITO
June 19, 1928 – September 21, 2020
Guitarist/co-founder of the Four Seasons

EDDY PUMER
October 7, 1947 – September 25, 2020
Guitarist with Kaleidoscope and Fairfield Parlour

PAUL MATTERS
Died October 14, 2020
Early bassist with AC/DC

JIMMY WINSTON
April 20, 1945 – September 26, 2020
Original keyboard player with the Small Faces

EMITT RHODES
February 25, 1950 – July 19, 2020
Cult US power-pop singer/songwriter

MAC DAVIS
January 21, 1942 – September 29, 2020
Nashville-based country-rock singer and songwriter

THEE SLAYER HIPPY
September 23, 1969 – May 22, 2020
Former drummer with Poison Idea

STEVE YORK
April 24, 1948 – October 14, 2020
Bass player for Eric Clapton, Mick Jagger and more

LEN BARRY
June 12, 1942 – November 5, 2020
American vocalist, songwriter and record producer

GORDON HASKELL
April 27, 1946 – October 15, 2020
Solo performer and former bassist/vocalist with King Crimson

SPENCER DAVIS
July 17, 1939 – October 19, 2020
Guitarist and leader of the Spencer Davis Group

TONY LEWIS
December 21, 1957 – October 19, 2020
Singer with British melodic hard rockers The Outfield

STAN KESLER
August 11, 1928 – October 26, 2020
American musician, producer and songwriter

FRANCIS 'ROCCO' PRESTIA
March 7, 1951 – September 29, 2020
Bassist with Tower Of Power

JIM RADFORD
October 1, 1928 – November 6, 2020
British folk singer-songwriter and activist

JOSEPH SHABALALA
August 28, 1940 – February 11, 2020
Collaborated with Paul Simon on *Graceland*

ASTRID KIRCHHERR
May 20, 1938 – May 12, 2020
German photographer of The Beatles fame

EDWARD VAN HALEN
Jan 26, 1955 – October 6, 2020
The Mozart of the electric guitar

GETTY x3

DEREK DAY

"CLICK ON ME"

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Vernon Reid of **Living Colour**

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derekdaymusic.com

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on spotify

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Paul McCartney

Still walking a long and winding road, Macca hits another purple patch with solo album number 19.

MARY McCARTNEY MPL COMMUNICATIONS

THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS

The Smashing Pumpkins

Cyr *SUMERIAN*

Billy Corgan's trademark sharp melodies fly on upbeat synth-pop.

With Billy Corgan having overseen numerous works of myth-laden grunge rock and spent much of the past decade releasing chunks and snippets of an unfinished 44-song concept album called *Teargarden By Kaleidyscope*, based on tarot, it's not surprising that his quasi-reunion of the original Smashing Pumpkins line-up is turning out to be anything but straightforward. For a start, while guitarist James Iha and drummer Jimmy Chamberlin are back on board, bassist D'arcy Wretzky has claimed she was excluded from sessions, in interviews detailing the unbearable stresses of being in the band in the 90s. And the traditional comeback nostalgia tour – the Pumpkins' will be themed around their *Melon Collie And The Infinite Sadness* commercial peak – will have to wait until the release of a 33-track concept album sequel to *Melon Collie* and 2000's *Machina/The Machines Of God*, due in 2021.

In the meantime, the band consolidated their reconnection with the brisk grunge-pop throwback album *Shiny And Oh So Bright, Vol. 1* in 2018, and continue that multi-part project with *Cyr*, their eleventh album, which, rather than rope back more old fans with dewy-eyed reconstructions of *Disarm* or *Tonight, Tonight*, invents what we'll call 'mythnopop'.

Bear with us. While Iha's guitars remain satisfyingly gnarled for most of the 20 tracks on *Cyr*, Corgan's runic lyricism (*Minerva* is named after the Roman goddess of war, *Ramona* and *Wyttch* come packed with hexes and spell-craft) largely comes attached to upbeat, enigmatic synth-pop. It's kind of Arcadian electro, if you will.

Whether emulating the noir-tronica of Depeche Mode on *Purple Blood* and *Telegenix*, or coming on like an EDM Jean Michel Jarre on the title track, it's a concoction that shouldn't work but does. The mystical imagery of phoenixes, devils and ancient kings trace a through line to the Pumpkins' roots in the sweeping and epic, while the album's electro-pop clarity highlights Corgan's sharpest collection of melodies in some years. There are moments of harder hitting electro-rock, such as *Wyttch* and *The Colour Of Love*, and even some industrial grinding on *Anno Satana* (which translates as – gulp – 'year of Satan'), but the more modernist stretches suggest that the old-look Smashing Pumpkins are determined not to be hog-tied to their past; the gorgeous *Save Your Tears* isn't a million psychedelic kaftans away from Tame Impala.

Disarming.

Mark Beaumont

Ellefson

No Cover *EARMUSIC*

Megadeth man spearheads indulgent but hugely spirited covers blow-out.

In the early days of the pandemic, Megadeth bassist Dave Ellefson assembled various mates to make music. A studio album of original material is on the cards for next year, but for now we have to make do with this collection of 18 cover versions.

While this inevitably feels self-indulgent, the covers will never match the originals and some of the vocals sound like karaoke night in a lumberjack bar, there's also no denying that it also celebrates all that's great about rock in an uplifting and joyous manner. The highlights include Billy Idol's *Rebel Yell*, Judas Priest's *Freewheel Burning*, ex-Slayer drummer Dave Lombardo contributing to *Riff Raff*, a nice run through Cheap Trick's *Auf Wiedersehen* (with Ministry's Al Jourgensen and Anthrax bassist Charlie Benante), an upbeat *Sheer Heart Attack* involving Doro Pesch, and an unexpected rendition of the marvellous banger *Nailed To The Gun*, originally by Rob Halford's 90s band Fight.

Jason Arnopp

King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

K.G. *CAROLINE*

Prolific Aussie band's sixteenth album since 2010.

Don't be put off by their admittedly annoying name, with its connotations of Antipodean gothic wackiness. Led by Stu Mackenzie, this six-piece manage to be so many things simultaneously, both eccentric and centric. Their use of the Arabic microtonal scale sets them off-kilter from orthodox progressions, as on the beautiful *Straws In The Wind*, but they have about them too the classic propulsion of an R.E.M. as well as the inventive elaboration of the best of 70s prog. They're at once myriad and multi-angled and straight ahead.

Although they recorded their pieces in isolation from one another, you'd hardly think it from listening to, say, *Ontology*, which feels like Can jamming in the same room, creating and feeding off a collective energy flow. Their interplay of conventional instruments is unconventionally jagged, pastoral, abrasive, exotic, heavy and light in equal measure.

David Stubbs

L.A. Guns

Renegades *GOLDEN ROBOT*

It's L.A. Guns, Jim, but not as we know it.

A band that lit up the Sunset Strip in the 80s has become something of a farce of late. Currently, and not for the first time, there are two versions of L.A. Guns operating. The greater credibility, and star quality, is in the version led by guitarist and founder Tracii Guns and singer Phil Lewis. Since the pair reunited they've made two strong albums in recent years: *The Missing Peace* and *The Devil You Know*.

But the other L.A. Guns, featuring two less famous survivors from the glory days, drummer Steve Riley and bassist Kelly Nickels, have delivered a solid record of their own in *Renegades*. With guitarist Scott Griffin and singer Kurt Frohlich avoiding the obvious trap of copying Guns and Lewis, the album is an update on the classic L.A. Guns sound, with shades of Velvet Revolver. And among the record's requisite sleazy rock tunes *Would* is a beautiful ballad.

Paul Elliott

5 Billion In Diamonds

Divine Accidents *MAKE*

Sunshine and strange times from Butch Vig and friends.

As we head into the darkest months of the year, Butch Vig, Andy Jenks and DJ James Grillo are back with this ray of sunshine, a shot of musical vitamin D, to see us through to the spring.

Opening with a blast of harmony-laden psych-pop so cheerful it should be available on prescription, this – shameless cliché alert – imaginary soundtrack to an imaginary film enables the transatlantic trio and their collaborators to stretch out in any direction they see fit, from the slick, 80s smooth-lounge of *The Unknown* (a song Alison Moyet could have made her own) to a nod to Echo And The

Bunnymen with *Into Your Symphony*. Elsewhere Helen White offers a 90s indie feel to the mix with her candied, Saint Etienne-style vocals.

Clearly made just for the sheer fun of it, this album is pleasingly odd and, in dreamy closing piano ballad *Dive In Me*, a little unnerving, hinting at something Lynchian lurking just around the corner.

Emma Johnston

Iron Maiden

Nights Of The Dead, Legacy Of The Beast: Live In Mexico City PARLOPHONE

Live and beastly.

These days, live albums aren't generally considered to be major events in the way they were when Maiden's *Live After Death* was released in '85, but the circumstances behind *Nights Of The Dead* might make it one to remember.

With this year's Legacy Of The Beast dates cancelled due to the ongoing pandemic, the band have opted to fill the void with an atmospheric show recorded before a boisterous audience on the 2019 leg of the tour. They tear forcefully into *Aces High* and *The Trooper*, and negotiate the tempo twists of long-form epics *Sign Of The Cross* and *For The Greater Good Of God* with vigour. Bruce Dickinson's lung power and stamina remain impressive as he nails high notes he first sang decades ago, most notably in *Revelations* and *Flight Of Icarus*.

A well-balanced set-list showcasing bloodthirsty versions of the band's classics and desirable deeper cuts makes this one of Maiden's more essential live albums.

Rich Davenport

Cats In Space

Atlantis SELF-RELEASED

Supremely crafted fourth album from rock classicists.

With a band name like that, you're not asking to be taken hugely seriously. But respect is due for the dedication shown by CIS in rekindling the spirit of a golden age of rock.

Their fourth studio album in five years sends reference points tumbling out of the speakers: the Saxon-ish riff of *Dive!*; the Lizzy-duels-with-Queen twin guitars and Darkness-does-Purple falsetto from new frontman Damien Edwards on *Spaceship Superstar; Sunday Best*'s neat ELO-isms; *Listen To The Radio*'s pearls of AOR bliss. Elsewhere, *Can't Wait For Tomorrow* is a stirring, phones-aloft ballad that suggests CIS are reaching a new peak of their powers. There's also a very 21st-century sardonic lyrical edge to *Revolution* (referring to '*a monkey in the white house*' and the '*deadly devil in the air*') and *I Fell Out Of Love With Rock'n'Roll*. The latter tune, however, seems to disprove its title through the sheer joy of its lusty synthesis of skilfully turned trad-rock tropes.

Johnny Sharp

Bring Me The Horizon

Post Human: Survival Horror BMG

Modern-metal mavericks hit their contact book hard on new EP.

Bring Me The Horizon are the band modern metal fans love to hate. But rather than buckle under the weight of online negativity, the Sheffield band have opted to use it as permission to try whatever the hell they want, and damn the reaction.

While 2019's *Amo* stirred grime, pop and minimalist electronic music into the mix – to the disgust of some fans – this new nine-track EP finds them reeling the experimentation in just slightly. Guitars are brought back front and centre on the crushing *Dear Diary* and anxiety-attack-in-a-bottle anthem *Tear Drop*, although the band take a page from the hip-hop playbook and rope in a small army of contemporary stars for big-name guest spots, including Babymetal, rapper of the moment Yungblud and Evanescence's Amy Lee.

The haters will protest, but this is the sound of metal dragging itself into the future.

Dave Everley

John Fogerty

Fogerty's Factory BMG

Creedence man brings the kids.

Of all the spring lockdown's most welcome distractions – from Tim Burgess's Listening Parties to Arnie's miniature donkeys – perhaps the most heartening was John Fogerty corralling his kids to cover his great American songbook on YouTube. Now a full release, you could warm your hands off the atmosphere on *Fogerty's Factory*, these retreads making the case for passion over prowess, with three semi-competent teens bringing what a grizzled sessioner could not.

To an extent, this factory runs on goodwill. In less cataclysmic times the exercise might be mawkish, and while a cover of *Lean On Me* is well-meant it feels a little like eating too much cake icing. But from the hand claps and propulsive jangle of *Centerfield* to the bobbing bliss of *Down On The Corner*, the joy of Fogerty's catalogue chimes with the times – and his 1969 apocalypse anthem *Bad Moon Rising* has never sounded so apt.

Henry Yates

Katatonia

Dead Air PEACEVILLE

Swedish gloomsters live in lockdown.

The lockdown livestream has become one of the defining musical trends of 2020 for obvious reasons, so it was only a matter time before the lockdown live album followed. Katatonia are among the first out of the gate. *Dead Air* was recorded during a gig in an empty studio in their native Stockholm back in May, with a 20-track set-list voted for by fans in an online poll.

While it hardly compares with the great double live albums of the 70s, it's an admirable achievement in sub-optimal circumstances. The band's gloomy, prog-tinged metal was never designed to hit the back rows of vast arenas, so the intimacy and socially isolated claustrophobia of the setting suits *Deliberation* and *The Racing Hearts*. And just like the live albums of old, it fulfils a second purpose: that of an unlikely 'greatest hits' album. A success, against the odds.

Dave Everley

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder

Bona Roba: slithery, black-leather rockers deliver the goods.

Bona Roba

No Attention SELF-RELEASED

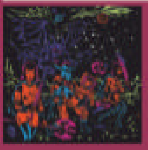
Fifteen years ago, Bona Roba was NYC's answer to the '72 Stones: decadent, loose, druggy and irresistibly hip, with songs that staggered and swaggered around like they owned the whole goddamn city. Their 2004 debut *Reach In And Get Her* remains an unheralded, stone-cold masterpiece. And then, just like that, it was all over. Frontman Neal Carlson popped up briefly in the public eye as one of the contestants in the ill-fated INXS-finds-a-singer reality show in 2005, but otherwise the Bona Roba story went silent. Until now.

It might've taken a decade and a half, but *No Attention* is exactly the follow-up you'd hope it is, with slithery, black-leather rockers like *Wildflower, They Wouldn't Understand* and the street-brawling title track delivering on every rubber-legged promise. Wings are stretched here and there – *Concentration* has a throbbing neon Joy Division-meets-Primal Scream vibe – but their molten core of impeccable cool remains intact.

Ball

Like You Are… I Once Was… Like I Am – You Will Never Be

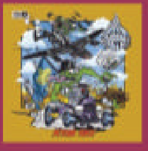
SELF-RELEASED



Stockholm's filthiest animals belch up this incredible slab of hoary rock'n'roll mayhem. Featuring a Wolfman Jack croak and guitars straight out of a Hellhammer demo, this ear-battering primitive assault on the senses is an all-encompassing feast of unholy terror that has to be heard to be believed.

The Drippers

Action Rock SELF-RELEASED



Scandinavian rock continues taking it to the man with The Drippers' debut album, a wholly overwhelming feast of hard-core rock'n'roll from the gutters of Gothenburg. It's like Gluecifer if you shot them out of one of those cartoon cannons. So hot it'll melt your leather boots into a puddle on the floor. Never before has an album been so aptly named.

Mud City Manglers

Give Me the Hammer

SPAGHETTY TOWN

Twenty (!) years after their scorching debut album *Heart Full Of Hate*, Pittsburgh punk'n'roll warriors Mud City Manglers return like it was yesterday and continue their all-out assault on the senses. Where have they been? From the sounds of it, the same dive bar they were in two decades ago. A four-on-the-floor wrecking ball of blazing rock action.

Voice of Doom

Saint Blaise SELF-RELEASED

Recorded in something called Possess-O-Sound (same as this review was written in), these Jersey creeps lean hard on darkness and despair with doomy blooze-punk bruisers like *Cousin Of Death, Bottom Of The World* and *Toxic Swamp*, all while sounding almost exactly like *Lucifuge*-era Danzig. And as most of us wish every record could be *Lucifuge*, this is obviously great news.

Neil Young & Crazy Horse

Return To Greendale *WARNERS*

Fan-polarising album recorded live in 2003, also as deluxe box set with documentary.

This considerably weighty set has attained near-mythical status among Neil Young fans. Some love it, some hate it. Not sure why anyone would want to do the latter; the subject matter may deviate a little from the usual Young template, but the songs all carry the same clout and passion you'd expect.

Greendale was a highly ambitious project: originally a studio album recorded with Crazy Horse, a tour, a film, a book and a graphic novel from DC Comics imprint Vertigo, conceptualised to recount the story of the Green family, who for generations have lived in the fictional California seaside town of Greendale. In this, Young takes on the role of a sonic narrative storyteller such as Bruce Springsteen or Tom Waits, detailing the minutiae and travails of life in small-town America – greed, brutality, corruption and environmental disaster all take their part in a highly moral audio-visual soundscape.

Return To Greendale is part of Young's ever-sprawling Performance Series, with the 10-song set reissued as a two-CD/two-LP live album recorded in Toronto on the supporting 2003 tour, and a deluxe box set that includes the music plus a concert film and a making-of documentary *Inside Greendale*.

There's a theory that the more cultures interact, the more their values, ideologies and customs will start to reflect each other. And that's what *Return To Greendale* and *Greendale* are concerned with. Both the 2003 album, and its accompanying year-long tour featuring dozens of actors to help enact the scenarios, are heartfelt howls of protest against culture convergence and the homogenisation of society in the face of capitalist greed. It's a little naïve in its presentation and denotations of homely American stereotypes, perhaps, but all the more powerful for that.

The connotations that can be drawn from the power and fury of the music surrounding Young's observational vignettes are striking indeed. You can feel the helplessness and anger of the protagonists, shaking as the saga unfolds.

It's an oddly affecting experience hearing Young detail his environmental concerns in 2020, when global warming and covid and Trump (who Young is limbering up to sue) are threatening to bring down the world entirely. Crazy Horse are in fine fettle, melodic and disharmonious on the opening scene-setter *Falling From Above*, heavier than heaven when occasion demands it (*Leave The Driving*) and always sweetly on-song.

Everett True

Kevin Godley

Muscle Memory *STATE 51/PLEDGE*

Extraordinary 'debut' from former 10cc visionary.

It still seems weird that as Kevin Godley turns 75 this is his first ever solo album. After many years of mind-bending music with 10cc and Godley & Creme, and vibrant video directing, we knew he was a gifted experimentalist with a gorgeous voice and a dark sense of humour. Those qualities feature in abundance on *Muscle Memory*, yet at no point is it what you'd expect. Often sinister, provocative and perverse, it addresses 2020's febrile neuroses as fearlessly as any record this discommoding year, and commands repeated listening.

Even its conception was unorthodox. Godley invited musicians to send him instrumentals he could work with. From hundreds of hopefuls, he chose 11, into which he's woven his words and themes. These include racism, America's ongoing insanity, the art-commerce interface, the pace at which technology is outrunning the imaginings of science-fiction, and a love song that turns creepy at the end because, you realise, this is just the way Godley writes. There must always be a twist, and *Bulletholes In The Sky* feels like a prayer for transcendence amid our over-stimulated world.

Singular and stirring.

Chris Roberts

Stan Bush

Dare To Dream *CARGO*

AOR cult hero in nostalgic mood.

Florida-born Stan Bush never made it big like Rick Springfield or Bryan Adams, but his signature song *The Touch*, a minor hit from the soundtrack to *The Transformers: The Movie*, was a quintessential 80s rock anthem as fist-pumping and era-defining as Kenny Loggins's *Top Gun* blaster *Danger Zone*. And that's where Bush's heart still lies. As he said recently: "I never left the eighties."

Every song on *Dare To Dream* is a throwback to the golden age of AOR; *Born To Fight* is reminiscent of Survivor's *Rocky* movie numbers, *Home* a simple ballad with a hint of John Waite's *Missing You*. Most meaningful of all, for a guy who lived the dream, is a song called simply, and without irony, *The 80s*. '*When I hear that music I still go crazy*,' he sings. '*It's like those days have never gone.*' He even throws in the odd 'Whoah-oh!' to make the years melt away.

Paul Elliott

The Wildhearts

30 Year Itch *ROUND*

Anthem after anthem, after motherfucking anthem!

At a time when there are no gigs to attend, we have Ginger and crew, supreme practitioners of the art of live rock'n'roll, giving it some much needed welly to transport you to your happy place. With 2019's stonking *Renaissance Men* to promote and bassist Danny McCormack back in the band, capturing the 2019 touring carnage was a bit of a no-brainer. And the joyful racket of these 17 tracks is something to behold.

Newies *Dislocated* and *Diagnosis* sit comfortably next to the likes of *The Jackson Whites* and *The Revolution Will Be Televised* and a healthy fistful of real oldies such as *Everlone*, *Caffeine Bomb*, *Suckerpunch*, *Love U Til I Don't* and *TV Tan*. But the renditions of *Urge* and *Anthem* are the real revelation, sounding so much better than the *Endless, Nameless* originals.

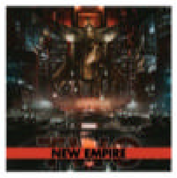
30 Year Itch is loud, atmospheric and buzzing with furious energy. Job done.

Essi Berelian

Hollywood Undead

New Empire, Vol. 2 *BMG*

Seventh album from ever-masked LA rap-rockers.



Revolving around Johnny 3 Tears, J-Dog, Funny Man, Charlie Scene and homeboys since PG-demolishing beginnings in 2005, Hollywood Undead's mask gimmick takes unforeseen relevance as the LA rap-rockers follow this year's *New Empire* with a second salvo of widescreen, rock-infused bedroom-moshing bellowing.

Already huge with the Linkin Park massive thanks to previous ejaculations like *American Tragedy* and *Day Of The Dead*, Undead plumb Bieber-style adolescent edge by buffing the bombastic assaults of *Idol*, *Monsters* and *Heart Of A Champion* with

GETTY

densely high-tech production, and suitably antsy guests including Tech9ne, Killstation, Ice Nine Kills and Papa Roach. Their crossover is compounded by going all boy-band on *Coming Home*'s stab at an arms-in-the-air lockdown anthem.

Kris Needs

Volbeat

Rewind, Replay, Rebound: Live In Deutschland REPUBLIC

Danes' latest album (and all the hits) live.

Bigger in Germany than Mercedes-Benz, it's little wonder that Volbeat decided to record a slew of sold-out shows there for their live album. When vocalist/guitarist Michael Poulsen says: "The German audience has always had a special place in our hearts since the very beginning. They have always supported us and still do", he's not kidding.

Back in 2013 I travelled out to Berlin to see them headline an enormous outdoor arena. It was in the middle of a storm that blew horizontal rain at the stage, but the frenzied German audience acted like it was the height of summer and AC/DC had just strolled on for the encore.

It sounds like little has changed, given the audience reaction in Stuttgart, Cologne and Hamburg to songs like *Dead But Rising*, *For Evigt* and *Leviathan*, Volbeat carried shoulder high, their songs in the eaves and filling the night.

Philip Wilding

Warrior Soul

Cocaine And Other Good Stuff LIVE WIRE/CARGO

Party-hearty covers album from sleaze-metal champs.

Kory Clarke has always been torn between drug-hoovering party animal and brick-throwing revolutionary, and you're never quite sure which version you're gonna get with the latest Warrior Soul release. This time around it's very clearly the former, as frontman Clarke kicks out the jams (remotely) with a lengthy roster of former bandmates around the globe for this gleefully anarchic collection of covers.

Chosen purposely for instant gratification and maximum saturation, Clarke and company put their blistering sleaze-metal spin on everything from The Cars' new-wave anthem *Let The Good Times Roll* to KC And The Sunshine Band's immortal disco floor burner *Get Down Tonight*. All of Clarke's touchstones are included (Alice Cooper, Judas Priest, Hendrix, Kiss), and they all sound mammoth, savage and feral.

We've been knee-deep in an escalating pandemic for nearly a year and, surveying the wreckage, rock'n' roll's last angry man decided we needed a party. And holy fuck, did he give us one.

Sleazegrinder

Sensible Gray Cells

Get Back Into The World

DAMAGED GOODS

Primitive pop smarts from punk super-trio.

Just as 2013's *A Postcard From Britain* set out to take the temperature of a nation in stasis, this belated follow-up from Sensible Gray Cells has timed its arrival carefully. The band – Damned duo Captain Sensible and Paul Gray, plus Johnny Moped drummer Marty Love replacing Ant Thickett – take potshots at a variety of cultural targets, from politics, social media and e-commerce to inane DJs and a certain sweat-free member of the Royal Family, while having a ball in the process.

Retro-leaning garage-psych is their choice of weapon, from the wonky pop flourishes of *What's The Point Of Andrew?* to *I Married A Monster*'s bullish trash-horror. There's lyrical slapstick (*Sell Her Spark* is an ode to Selhurst Park, home of the Captain's beloved Crystal Palace FC), but also unexpected moments of reflection. The politically pointed *You And Me*, for example, is a welcome meditation on the things that truly matter.

Rob Hughes

The War On Drugs

Live Drugs SUPER HIGH QUALITY

Raw retro-rockers attain the addictive.

Drawn from multiple shows and sequenced to convey how an idealised The War On Drugs set would sound, this album captures both what is lauded and decried about the band. On the one hand they sometimes loosen up and rock out so much that the Dire Straits/Crazy Horse comparisons are undeniable, with a "Woo! Yeah!" from Adam Granduciel on *Under The Pressure*, twitching like an over-excited Bryan Adams. On the other, the curious brittle magic that usually lifts them above such pitfalls is prevalent. If anyone's made the time-honoured 'Get ready here comes the escalating guitar solo' moment thrilling again, it's these guys. Only an ice-hearted puritan could resist cranking up the volume when they take off into their controlled airspace. They're the E Street Band on *Eyes To The Wind*, while admirably restrained when covering Warren Zevon's *Accidentally Like A Martyr*. Bottom line is that live they sound life-affirming.

Chris Roberts

Mr Bungle

The Raging Wrath Of The Easter Bunny Demo

IPECAC RECORDINGS

Disturbing Bungle-style surgical strike on thrash metal.

Renowned as willful contrarians, Mr Bungle stay true to form and return with a record that bears little resemblance to the genre-defying 90s albums with which they made their name, instead going way back in time to '86 to revisit their first high-school demo tape and do justice to the pure teenage metal side of the band.

For this record Mike Patton, Trey Spruance and Trevor Dunn have brought in Scott Ian and Dave Lombardo for a bit of extra heft and speed, and the results are wildly, sometimes hilariously caustic and unhinged, not least due to Patton's unintelligible death-vomit vocals. Opener *Grizzly Adams* is the calm before the storm, as everything from *Anarchy Up Your Anus* to *Sudden Death* is about light-speed riffing and precision brutality.

A weirdly uncomfortable and exhilarating listening from start to finish.

Essi Berelian

ROUND-UP: MELODIC

By Dave Ling

Unruly Child: the same old problems remain.

Unruly Child

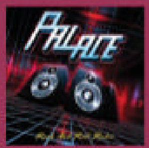
Our Glass House FRONTIERS

Back in 1992, Unruly Child released one of the most fantastic melodic hard rock debuts of all time. Sadly, record label issues and the onset of grunge meant that its magnificence went almost unrecognised, and by the year's end they broke up. Further records were made with replacement vocalists, but with singer Marcie Michelle Free embracing her authentic self a reunion seemed unlikely. But then 10 years ago the originals regrouped for *Worlds Collide* and fans were elated. Some of the old Unruly Child magic lingered in fits and starts, but the focus was diluted.

Their fourth album since the comeback begins with *Poison Ivy*, a real humdinger, and things accelerate with the expletive-charged *Say What You Want*, which conjures memories of the old days. But after such an encouraging start it all becomes a little... pedestrian? At the midway mark it's evident that the same old problems remain. That Unruly Child dilute two tracks from that immortal debut, *To Be Your Everything* and *Let's Talk About Love*, with acoustic treatment, perhaps says it all.

Palace

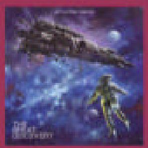
Rock And Roll Radio FRONTIERS



There are some who dislike Michael Palace for his sheer flashiness. The Swede is credited with "everything" on this, the third Palace album – vocals, songwriting, instrumentation and production; the band even bear his magnificent surname. What's with the haters? This album carries the colourful swagger of an artist assured of their talent and living the best times of their life.

Boys From Heaven

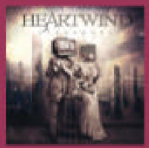
The Great Discovery TARGET



Although still in their early 20s, Danes Boys From Heaven have the stadium rock of the 70s – specifically Toto and Journey – in their blood. Following a critically praised EP, this full-length debut complements the smooth and agreeable voice of Chris Catton with high-class musicianship and a consistently strong repertoire of tunes, plus a range of tempos and feels.

Heartwind

Strangers ESCAPE MUSIC



The second album from keyboard player Mikael Rosengren and multi-instrumentalist Goran Engvall reheats the formula of 2018's *Higher And Higher*: crunchy, slick, air-punching radio rock aimed squarely at the Leppard/Whitesnake/Van Halen ballpark, with excellent vocals. You can bet your house on just about anything that features Erik Mårtensson, and Heartwind is no exception.

East Temple Avenue

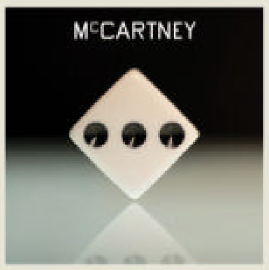
Both Sides Of Midnight

AOR HEAVEN

Darren Phillips was the host of a melodic rock radio show in Australia, but here, joined by Robbie LaBlanc (Find Me, Blanc Faces), the guitarist, songwriter and producer has a band that perform cultured, exquisite AOR. LaBlanc's singing alone is worth the price of admission, although that statement undersells *Both Sides Of Midnight*.

Paul McCartney

McCartney III *CAPITOL*



Nineteenth solo album finds Macca enjoying yet another purple patch.

Considering his exalted position in popular music culture (it's difficult to think of anyone who has contributed more), Paul McCartney has always been remarkably unprecious about his recorded output. Cynics might dismiss the likes of *Ebony And Ivory* and *Pipes Of Peace* as pop bromides (let's not mention *The Frog Chorus*), but for a songwriter now in his sixth decade at the top it is all part of a seemingly limitless creative flow.

This more-is-more approach certainly has its detractors – as long ago as 1970 John Lennon dismissed McCartney's debut solo album as "rubbish" – but fans will hardly be complaining at the prospect of this unexpected glut of new material.

Recorded at his home in Sussex during the spring lockdown, Macca's third self-titled album shares the off-the-clock feel of both 1970's *McCartney* and 1980's *McCartney II*. However, while its two predecessors reflected dramatic shifts in his musical life – coming at the end of the career of The Beatles and Wings respectively – *III* is the sound of a less restless McCartney simply doing what he does best.

Bucolic opener *Long Tailed Winter Bird* has more tonal shifts than most bands manage in an entire album, signalling the start of a melodic gold rush that sees him happily mine his own illustrious past. *Lavatory Lil* is a salty boogie that could fit nicely on the second side of *Abbey Road*, while *Slidin'* is an exhilarating 24-carat rocker in the mould of *Venus And Mars* track *Letting Go*, all snaking guitar lines and an impassioned vocal, in which he growls: *'This is what I wanna do, who I want to be.'* A reflective *Pretty Boys*, meanwhile, sees him acknowledging his own experience of the pop process, musing: *'Here come the pretty boys, they're gonna set the world on fire/Objects of desire.'*

McCartney's innate pop sensibility shines through on the jaunty earworm *Find My Way*, and a breezy *Seize The Day* in which he acknowledges his own cheery disposition, declaring: *'It's still alright to be nice.'*

While the final *When Winter Comes* sees him enjoying the concerns of a typical well-heeled septuagenarian (*'Must fix the fence by the acre plot'*), the stakes are raised for the penultimate *Deep Down*. This finds the 78-year-old delivering a crepuscular, hip-hop-informed groove about *'throwing a party every night'*, which singlehandedly detonates the concept of ageism.

On the form displayed on this album, the boy's got quite a future.

Paul Moody

Kelly Jones

Don't Let The Devil Take Another Day *PARLOPHONE*

Stereophonics frontman reimagines his songbook.

While cynics might scoff at the notion of a Stereophonics song having hidden depths, this live collection from frontman Kelly Jones, along with a cast of multi-instrumentalists, twists his Britrock standards into fine new shapes. *Mr Writer* is bolstered with horns from a manic-depressive Mariachi band. *Traffic* unearths a latent Nashville flavour, fiddles slicing over Jones's acoustic strum. The youthful rush of debut single *Local Boy In The Photograph* is slowed right down to become an older man's rumination, its eulogy to a hometown suicide seeping over the audience. Biggest hit *Dakota* loses the FM sheen to emerge as a garage cruncher, Jones's voice sounding almost operatic in the chorus.

Elsewhere, even when the songs cling to their moorings there are nice back stories, particularly Jones's memory of being "last in the bath water after my two older brothers" before *Hurry Up And Wait*.

Henry Yates

Penny Rimbaud

Arthur Rimbaud In Verdun *ONE LITTLE INDEPENDENT*

Brutally vivid Great War fiction from Crass veteran.

Poet, philosopher and maverick Penny Rimbaud has hardly let the grass grow under his feet this past year. Not content with *Crassical Collections* and *Christ's Reality Asylum* (the first an extensive overhaul of the Crass back catalogue, the second a radical rework of the Crass manifesto, initially laid out in anarcho-punk form in 1977, the year he co-founded the band), Rimbaud has now turned his attention to World War I.

French namesake Arthur Rimbaud died more than 20 years before the conflict began, but Penny flings him into the trenches of the Western Front as a war poet. It's a visceral and disturbing experience, as Penny spits out verses in Arthur's tongue over free-jazz improvisations from tenor sax players Evan Parker, Louise Elliott and Ingrid Laubrock. The violence and profanity of the language echoes the horror of what he sees, shells shrieking overhead as he navigates a *'slime of pus and gore'*, knee-deep in shit. Cultural references are scattered amid the carnage, while sex and death acquire the same sense of heightened desperation.

A difficult listen, but an acutely powerful one.

Rob Hughes

Sons Of Otis

Isolation *TOTEM CAT*

Raising the doom bar.

Formed by singer-guitarist Ken Baluke in 1993, and named after a *Henry: Portrait Of A Serial Killer* character, Toronto's Sons Of Otis follow their 2012 sixth studio album, *Seismic*, with six more monolithic slabs of what their blurb trumpets as, "the heaviest stoner doom ever known to man".

Following some tension-building controlled feedback, Baluke, bassist Frank Sargeant and drummer Ryan Aubin launch into opener *Blood Moon*'s variation on time-honoured doom building block The *Black Sabbath* Riff, bludgeoning it senseless as they heave through blizzards of evil-monster flatulence, Baluke's distorted gargle squelching in from Satan's outside kharsie.

While *Ghost* and *JJ* maintain the funereal grind, the psychedelic flourishes that periodically elevate the band's relentless terror-sludge manifest through twinkling textures on *Hopeless* and *Trust*'s squalling wah-wah. The trio's malevolent stun-blasts reach their apogee on *Theme II*'s Bosch-like tapestry of severed-testicle torment rising from the hell below.

Kris Needs

Dream Theater

Distant Memories: Live In London *SONY BMG*

Veteran virtuosos return to full vivacity.

Six years is an unusually long time for fans to wait for a new Dream Theater live album, but this one has 'major doozy' written all over it from the start. The prog-metal titans' last world tour was doubly celebratory, as they celebrated the 20th anniversary of one of their most loved records (*Metropolis Part 2*

MARY MCCARTNEY/MPL COMMUNICATIONS/PRESS

– *Scenes From A Memory*) and the near-universal acclaim received for recent return-to-form *Distance Over Time*.

As a result, while no one could ever accuse Dream Theater of slacking on previous live records, *Distant Memories: Live In London* is notable for its skull-shattering levels of exuberance and heavy metal thunder. The new songs are as vital and memorable as any the band have written, with *Pale Blue Dot* standing out as an epic for the ages, while a full run-through of *Metropolis Part 2* is both immaculate (natch) and far feistier than it should be two decades on.

Frankly, this is the sound of Dream Theater rediscovering their collective mojo and having an absolutely brilliant time in front of an adoring audience. Available in all manner of formats, it might be exactly what diehard admirers need to get them through a grim winter.

Dom Lawson

Walter Lure's LAMF

Live In Tokyo SECRET

Last Heartbreaker's last stand.

Guitarist Mick Rossi has never hidden his devotion to lamented ex-New York Dolls guitarist and former Heartbreaker Johnny Thunders. Originally coming to our attention with Slaughter And The Dogs (who found room on their *Do It Dog Style* debut for the Dolls' *Who Are The Mystery Girls?*), Rossi makes a fair fist of fulfilling JT's vacant role as he tours Japan alongside the legendary last Heartbreaker standing, Walter Lure.

This characteristic set (largely based in, but not exclusively restricted to, the Heartbreakers' *LAMF* debut) from November '19 would prove to be Lure's last recording (he died in August), and consequently, despite serious technical shortcomings, it's been nursed back to bootleg-quality near-health for release.

Predictable crowd pleasers are interspersed with originals and covers more readily associated with Walter's Waldos (*Crazy Kids* from Thunders flick *Room 37*'s soundtrack, Harlan Howard's *Busted*) and Rossi's Dogs (*Situations* from *Cranked Up Really High*, Lou Reed's *I'm Waiting For The Man*). The audience is in raptures, Lure's charm unmistakable and the atmosphere positively crackles.

Waldo never really got his due. His contribution to the Heartbreakers was invariably overshadowed by Thunders' charismatic reputation, but it's an undeniable fact that many of what posterity tells us are Johnny Thunders' finest solos were actually played by Walter Lure.

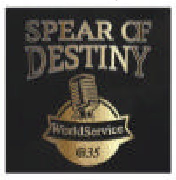
Ian Fortnam

Spear Of Destiny

World Service @35

EASTERSNOW RECORDINGS

Kirk Brandon and co. reboot 1985 misfire with extra muscle and manly stubble.



Spear Of Destiny's third album *World Service* was widely deemed a disappointment by fans, critics and band alike when it was released in 1985. With hindsight, frontman Kirk Brandon largely blames the original's over-polished pop-rock sound on producer Rusty Egan (of Blitz club and Visage fame).

Fully re-recorded, re-sequenced and expanded for this 35th-anniversary version, complete with lightly updated lyrics, these clamouring, fists-aloft battle cries certainly deliver more brawny muscle than before. Sounding increasingly gravelly and guttural with age, the 64-year-old singer roars like a Cockney Springsteen on widescreen gunslinger anthems like *Harlan County* and *Cole Younger*, going full punk granddad on the kitchen-sink Falklands War requiem *Mickey*.

But while this stripped-down, beefed-up rawness improves some tracks, others now sound lacklustre and prosaic: punk-funk belter *Once In Her Lifetime* becomes a paunchy plodder, *Walk In My Shadow* turgid bluesy pub rock.

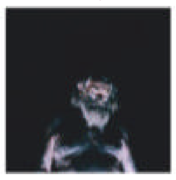
A partially successful salvage job overall, and the restrained piano-ballad remake of *Young Men* is a welcome addition.

Stephen Dalton

Nothing

The Great Dismal RELAPSE

Fourth album of shoegaze magnificence from Philadelphia's black-hole sons.



Philadelphia's Nothing have never been the most happy-go-lucky of bands, but with *The Great Dismal* their uniquely beautiful brand of nihilistic pessimism reaches intergalactic proportions. Influenced by a 2019 *New York Times* cover featuring the first ever image of a black hole, frontman Dominic Palermo sinks willingly into a heart of darkness from which nothing can escape, before masochistically, luxuriously bathing in the despair and hopelessness he sees in human existence. It was recorded during 2020's first lockdown, and the claustrophobia is palpable.

Despite all the gloom, this is a deeply enjoyable album. Musically there's an elegance that instantly betrays a love of the 4AD label stable of the 1980s, a gothic beauty in the fuzzy, layered guitars and Palermo's understated vocals, while the industrial whirr of *Say Less* gives way to a hint of prog melodicism. Like the moment of calm acceptance that kicks in when you know you're going to fall, and you just let it happen, *The Great Dismal* conjures a stunning sense of euphoria in the face of forces much more powerful than any one of us.

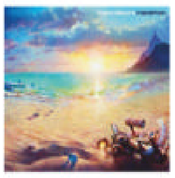
Emma Johnston

Marathon

Mark Kelly's Marathon

EARMUSIC

Marillion man rocks and pops on his first 'solo' record.



For those familiar with Mark Kelly as the brooding keyboard player set above his bandmates on stage behind a bank of keyboards, his face caught in the spotlight like the moon appearing beneath a cumulus cloud, *Marathon*, his first 'solo' album, might come as something of a surprise. Not that he's finally divested himself of that grindcore album he's been longing to make – this record is elegant prog-pop and rock that Marillion fans will jump at the way an overweight child goes after ice cream – but there's a lightness of touch at play here; fewer bleak notes, Kelly's looking up, not down.

He's unearthed a gem in singer Oliver M Smith too, a keening yet warm-sounding foil to Kelly's dexterous keyboard runs and stabs of florid colour. The album is also stuffed with songs, such as the spangly pop of *This Time*, and the ambitious, stuttering *Puppets* makes for an easy listen in the least obvious way.

Philip Wilding

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Ruff Majik

The Devil's Cattle MONGREL

Immense sleaze-groove grinds predominate on this compelling debut from South African mondo bizarro desert rockniks Ruff Majik. Grimy, gritty, relentless, yet morbidly, darkly attractive. **8/10**

Nick Faber

The Lost Highway Tapes FABYL

An intoxicating melange of blues, funk, soul, breakbeats and dusty roadside busker chic. Soundscapes rich in humanity and hard-won experience. Americana with a progressive contemporary edge. **7/10**

Robin Trower, Maxi Priest, Livingstone Brown

United State Of Mind MANHATON

The common ground found by soulful reggae vocalist Priest and rock journeyman Trower (Brown produces) proves richly fertile. *USM* combines Marvin R&B, Jimi tones and subtley funky blues to excellent effect. **7/10**

White Hills

Splintered Metal Skies GODUNKNOWN

Dystopian NYC refracted through an electro-fuzz lens. Core duo Dave W and Ego Sensation's psyched Cabs/digital Stooges spikiness is further mutated by guest spots from Jim Jarmusch and the Primals' Simone Marie Butler. Delicious dissonance. **7/10**

Cordovas

Destiny Hotel ATO

Smoothly wrought Tennessee folk rock that's a little bit country and a lesser bit rock'n'roll. Tight harmonies, laconic grooves and McLagan-echoing keys accentuate the merest suggestion of Faces raunch. **6/10**

Laibach

Bremenmarsch: Live At Schlachtof 12.10.1987 MIG

Captured at their raw, uncompromising peak, Laibach combine hectoring Teutonic aggression, ear-bleed samples and rudimentary brass with soul-crushing Nuremberg Rally ambience to devastating effect. **7/10**

Kurt Baker

After Party WICKED COOL

An Elvis Costello-influenced vocal bounces breezily over a muscularly punk-pumped new-wave back beat. An attractively archaic, beautifully observed near-parody of '78 tropes by the ex-Leftovers Anglophile. **7/10**

Spunk Volcano And The Eruptions

Barry Milner Is Thick! AVENUE

Nothing benefits Motörhead/SoCal hardcore-referencing punk rock less than a synthetic vocal production. The harder they thrash, the better, but a sonically sanitised Spunk Volcano? Surely some mistake. **6/10**

Taurian

Taurian SOUNDCLOUD

Placing bullish post-Reznor electrorock in atmospheric trip-hop settings intensifies Taurian's dynamism. Hints of unsettling dubstep accentuate feral Manson tropes as the Romanian hoofs a new kind of kick. **8/10**

Helen Love

Power On ALCOPOP

Sidestep festive grimness with the latest frothy popcore confection from Cardiff's evergreen bubblegum punkers. As effervescent as any Blondie-graced '78 *TOTP*, this should be available on prescription. **8/10**

Vinny Peculiar And The Art Thieves

Loot BANDCAMP

Captured live at Evesham's Old Cider Press during lockdown and bordering on genius, Loot's six tracks capture Vinny at his incomparable best. Sharp, witty, swaggering. A shade short of masterpiece. **9/10**

Live Skull

Dangerous Visions BRONSON

Originally post-NY No Wave Swans/Sonic Youth brethren, Live Skull reanimated during covid to concoct the appropriately tense and dissonant new material, coupled here with a 1989 Peel session. Reassuringly awkward. **7/10**

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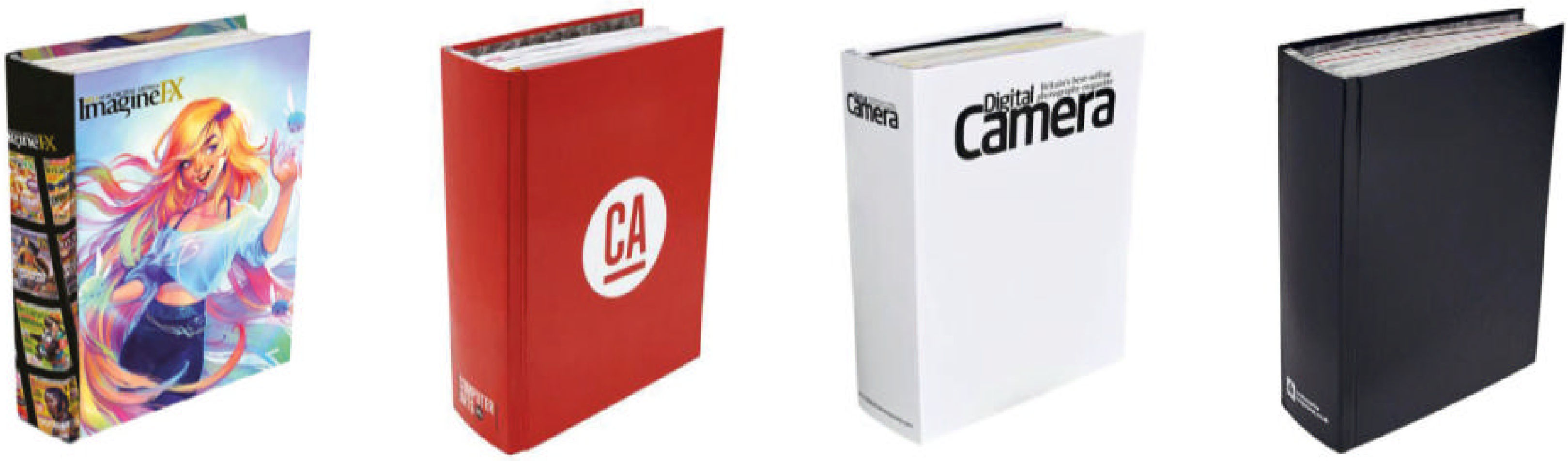

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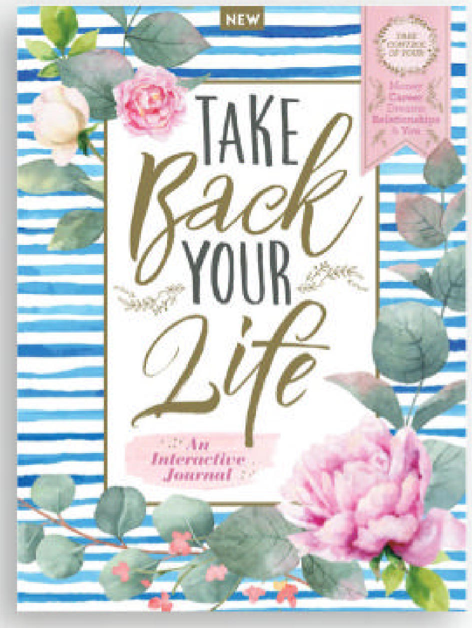

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Killing Joke

Reissues SPINEFARM

Honour the fire! Two Joke zeniths get double vinyled, while singles get quadruply collected.

Nothing else makes a noise quite like Killing Joke. Co-founding drummer Paul Ferguson once famously decribed it as "the sound of the earth vomiting". But it's more seismic than that. You can ask yourself where it came from all you like, intellectualise over the socio-political backdrop from whence it emerged or individual band members' formative musical influences (be they classical, dub, Floyd, punk or Chic) until you're nauseous, but the sound of Killing Joke is way beyond human understanding. It just is.

Listening back to their self-titled debut of 1980 (**10/10**), the first question your assaulted psyche wants answered is which auteur producer coaxed this extraordinary titanic roar from the four largely untried musicians? Steve Lillywhite? Chris Thomas? Lee Perry? Astonishingly, they did it themselves. On first hearing, you don't question *Requiem*, it simply rolls over you like breaking surf. It's a physical, visceral thing. You can't stroke your chin over the inner workings of *Wardance*, you're too busy having your inner primitive reanimated. But, 40 years later, as you cock an analytical ear to KJ's latest painstaking cut, its very existence seems entirely unlikely.

In 1980, nobody played guitar like Geordie, no guitarist *sounded* like Geordie. The tribal immensity of Big Paul's drums and Youth's foundation-threatening dub bass certainly existed elsewhere, but not in rock, post-punk or otherwise. And Jaz Coleman…. That voice? Lydon's and Strummer's were stylised ferocity; Coleman's froze blood.

The intrinsic KJ sound remains ageless, another benefit of being born fully formed. It's never had to develop terribly far, it's always dwelt on the outer limits, the brink, never quite in fashion, never quite out.

But there have been occasions when the planets have aligned and they've intensified their art accordingly. Partially recorded in the King's Chamber of The Great Pyramid at Giza, 1994's *Pandemonium* (**9/10**), especially its title track, is Killing Joke in excelsis. Everything's turned up to 'huge'. Coleman spits and spews his *Exorcism* as Geordie appears to rip actual flesh from his Gibson ES-295. And *Millennium*? Immense. *Pandemonium* is an absent Ferguson short of perfection.

Both of these defining KJ classics have been re-pressed across double vinyl in honour of the band's 40th anniversary, while their equally essential *The Singles Collection 1979-2012* (**9/10**) re-emerges as a weighty quadruple set. And, frankly, you'd be a fool not to.

Ian Fortnam

Graham Bonnet

Solo Albums 1974–1982 HNE

Six-record set that proves Bonnet can pretty much sing anything – and did.

There's no denying that Graham Bonnet was easily the sharpest looking singer the band ever had. To this day, he still looks like the ghost of a young Elvis and, judging by some of the pictures on this latest box set, rarely buttoned up a shirt in his life.

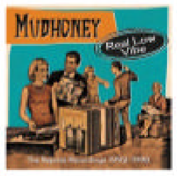
Solo Albums 1974–1982 charts Bonnet's rise and fall from the early 70s up to (regardless of this collection's title) 2015 for two tracks from the Graham Bonnet Band's *My Kingdom Come* EP. Like the curate's egg, it's good in parts, although that's more down to Bonnet's material reflecting the era he's working in than to any of his performances: blues standards, rock'n' roll, hard rock, the dizzying 12-inch-long disco version of *Warm Ride* that goes on longer than Brexit. There's no denying the flashes of brilliance though: *Night Game*, 1987's *Tonite I Fly*, the thundering *Dead Man Walking*, Bonnet riding high and hard, his vocals clear and strong.

Philip Wilding

Mudhoney

Real Low Vibe: The Reprise Recordings 1992-1998 CHERRY RED

This is the real shit, the true grunge.



Mudhoney should have been massive. They weren't, and for that you can blame their punk 'tudes and singer Mark Arm's laconic fuck-you nature. While around them their Seattle comrades (Alice In Chains, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Nirvana) were signing up for big bucks and bigger sales, the band that started the whole grunge gravy train a-rollin' with their seminal 1989 12-inch cut *Touch Me I'm Sick* missed out.

Sure, they signed to Reprise. *Piece Of Cake* (1992, **7/10**), their debut for that major label, was a splenetic, frantic slab of garage rock and wah-wah that didn't go down too well with critics or fans, though. It felt, frankly, half-baked, a thumbed nose at the hype surrounding their city. Guitarist Steve Turner was always too much a fan of wildcard garage rocker Billy Childish to worry about success. Standout tracks are the acerbic *Suck You Dry* and the ominous *Blinding Sun*.

The follow-up, 1995's perversely titled *My Brother The Cow* (**9/10**), sold far less yet features even more moments of tumultuous Stooges-inflamed splendour, and should be a staple in every grunge aficionado's home, if only for the brutal two-chord Courtney Love put-down *Into Your Shtik*. Tight, aggressive and brutal. Their record label hated it, of course.

Tomorrow Hits Today (1998, **8/10**) continued the high standard, psychedelic and guitar-saturated, full of class three-minute classics such as *Real Low Vibe*. Bluesy and beautiful.

The four-CD box set includes a live album, *On Tour Now* (**8/10**), recorded in 1993 when Mudhoney were at their considerable peak as a live band. Oh, and there are shitloads of extra tracks accompanying each album. Like I say: the true grunge.

Everett True

Iron Butterfly

Unconscious Power: An Anthology 1967-71 ESOTERIC

Seven CDs, 85 tracks from a pioneering band.

It's difficult to overstate just how influential San Diego's Iron Butterfly were, but this exhaustive collection explains why they deserve to be ranked among the founding fathers of American heavy rock. There's nothing new here, just the first four albums (*Heavy* and *Ball* appear twice, in mono and stereo), the live album *Live*, and four concerts played over two spring 1968 nights at the Fillmore East, originally released in 2011.

A one-stop musical melting pot, Iron Butterfly embraced prog, acid and 60s R&B, while fashioning something new and vibrant. Doug Ingle's rich voice and swirling, stentorian Vox Continental organ dominated, but around him drummer Ron Bushy, bassist Lee Dorman and a succession of guitarists built a dense sonic attack that took them from the early Manfred Mann inflections of 1968's *Heavy* to the more brutal swamp of 1971's *Metamorphosis*.

The title track to their second album, Ingle's *In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida* (roughly 'In The Garden Of Eden') defined them and propelled its parent album to

quadruple-platinum status in the US. Yet for all its gargantuan riff, Ingle's Nice-esque keyboards and the sense of apocalyptic doom, it's the reddest of herrings. On *Live* it took up all the vinyl album's second side and lasted for 19 exhilarating minutes, but elsewhere, only *Metamorphosis*'s *Butterfly Bleu* went over the 10-minute mark. Instead they specialised in short, attention-grabbing slabs of proto heaviness such as *In The Time Of Our Lives* and *Stamped Ideas*, which were as thrilling as they were ground-breaking.

Reassessment is long overdue. This should do the trick.

John Aizlewood

George Thorogood And The Destroyers

Live In Boston 1982: The Complete Concert CRAFT

Badder than ever.

Arguably more Chuck Berryesque than Chuck Berry himself. George Thorogood is a kind of sensei of rock'n'roll, a Zen master of boogie. Had he never written a song himself (and he hasn't written many), Thorogood would be deserving of honours for his interpretations of the music of John Lee Hooker (*One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer*), Bo Diddley (*Who Do You Love*) and Berry himself (just about everything). It makes sense that GT's records came out on the folk-preserving Rounder Records label, because his entire career is based on saving rock'n'roll for the nation. Which is not to say, as this astonishing live album is testament to, that his efforts are dull and worthy: Thorogood and his aptly-named Destroyers are, like AC/DC, like ZZ Top, like Dr. Feelgood, a bar band to end all bar bands.

From Thorogood's own *Bad To The Bone* to the astonishing cover of Berry's *It Wasn't Me* (*'I met a German girl in England who was livin' in France/She said we danced The Mississippi at an Alpha Kappa dance'*), this album – extended from its original release to a butt-thumping 24 tracks and two and a half hours – is entirely superb, a master class in live performance and whipping up crowd excitement. The music – even a 13-minute *One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer* – flies by, and at the end the sated listener is forced to conclude that this may well be one of the great live albums.

David Quantick

Helloween

Seven Sinners NUCLEAR BLAST

German trad-metallers beef things up.

Back in 2010, when it came to their thirteenth studio album, German veterans Helloween decided to go for a heavier style. In terms of sonic intensity, *Seven Sinners* practically became the band's equivalent of Judas Priest's *Painkiller*, but it didn't sound too much like Helloween. If you're looking for the unique Helloween sound born on 1987's classic *Keeper Of The Seven Keys*, with its upbeat 'happy pumpkin' tone, you'll find little of that on this remastered edition.

Still, rather than judging *Seven Sinners* for what it's not, let's assess what it is – a strong, largely heads-down slab of melodic, overblown Euro metal. So metal is it, in fact, that it includes a song called *Are You Metal?*, an obvious highlight along with *World Of Fantasy* and *My Sacrifice*. Since Helloween have always had a wilfully perverse streak, though, it also features a regrettable flute solo.

Jason Arnopp

Various Artists

Living On The Hill: A Danish Underground Trip 1967–1974 ESOTERIC

A compendium of Denmark's first generation of psych, prog and heavy nuggets.

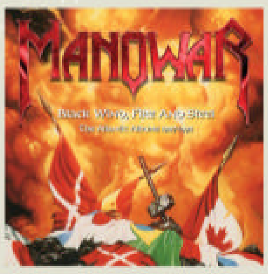
The dominance of Anglo-American rock since the 1950s has come to drive and define the narrative of its evolution, to the detriment of its continental cousins. True, the re-emergence and influence of German 70s kosmische music over the past decade on the contemporary psych scene – and, to a lesser degree, the contribution of French and Italian proggers of the day – has gone some way to redressing the balance, but the contribution of Scandinavian bands is frequently overlooked.

Set against a background of psychedelics, protest and social upheaval, and wisely sequenced in chronological order, this three-CD compilation tells a largely unknown story. Although the styles of music vary, the uniting characteristic throughout is a free-form, let-it-all-hang-out attitude that's unencumbered by what would have been perceived as such bourgeois and oppressive notions as the verse-chorus-verse format. Young Flower's 10-minute freak-out *Kragerne Vender* sounds like the whole of their commune was involved in its creation, while the likes of Burnin' Red Ivanhoe's *Ksilioy* suggest that flute sales in Denmark must have gone through the roof at the tail end of the 60s, along with those of King Crimson's debut *In The Court Of The Crimson King*.

As the collection progresses, hippie whimsy is gradually replaced by tougher workouts. The proto-metal of Culpepper Orchard's *Mountain Music* hits hard, while Day Of Phoenix's *Paradox* acts as a stepping stone to German neighbours Neu!

Although much of the material here is music of its time, this collection is an intriguing and worthy history lesson.

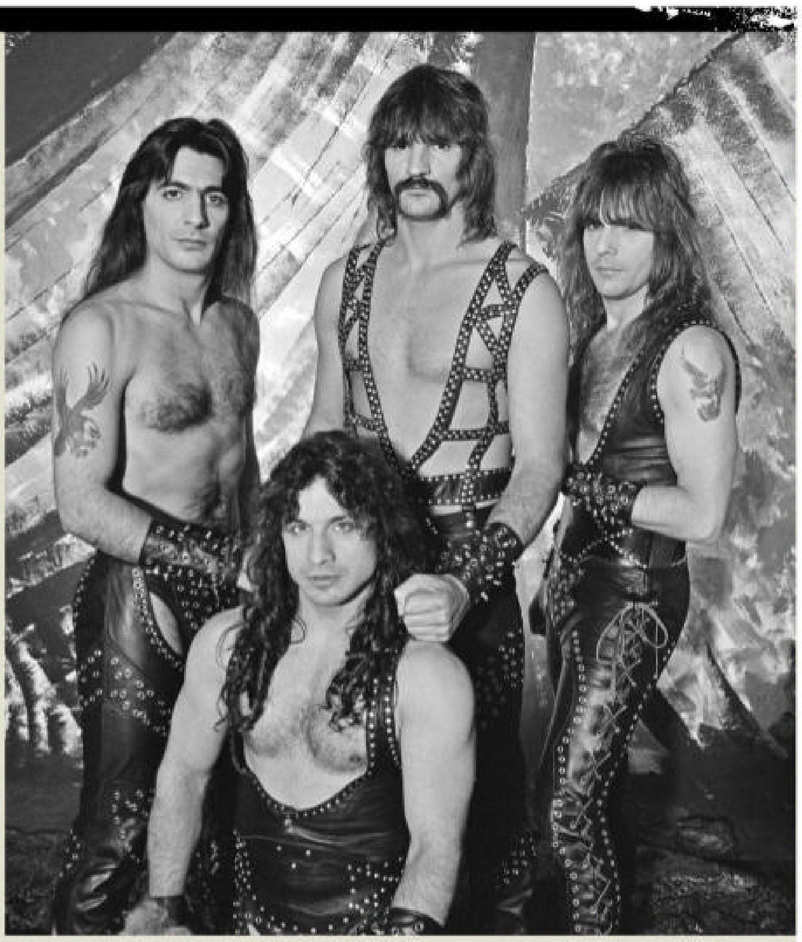
Julian Marszalek



Manowar

Black Wind, Fire & Steel: The Atlantic Albums (1987-1992) CHERRY RED

The true metallers' three albums for Atlantic.



GETTY

This three-album set covers the mid-period of Manowar's career, between their indie-label beginnings and their later retreat to their own label. A bare-bones reissue, with no extra tracks or sleeve notes, it represents the best of this unique band, even when we take one majorly indulgent misstep into account.

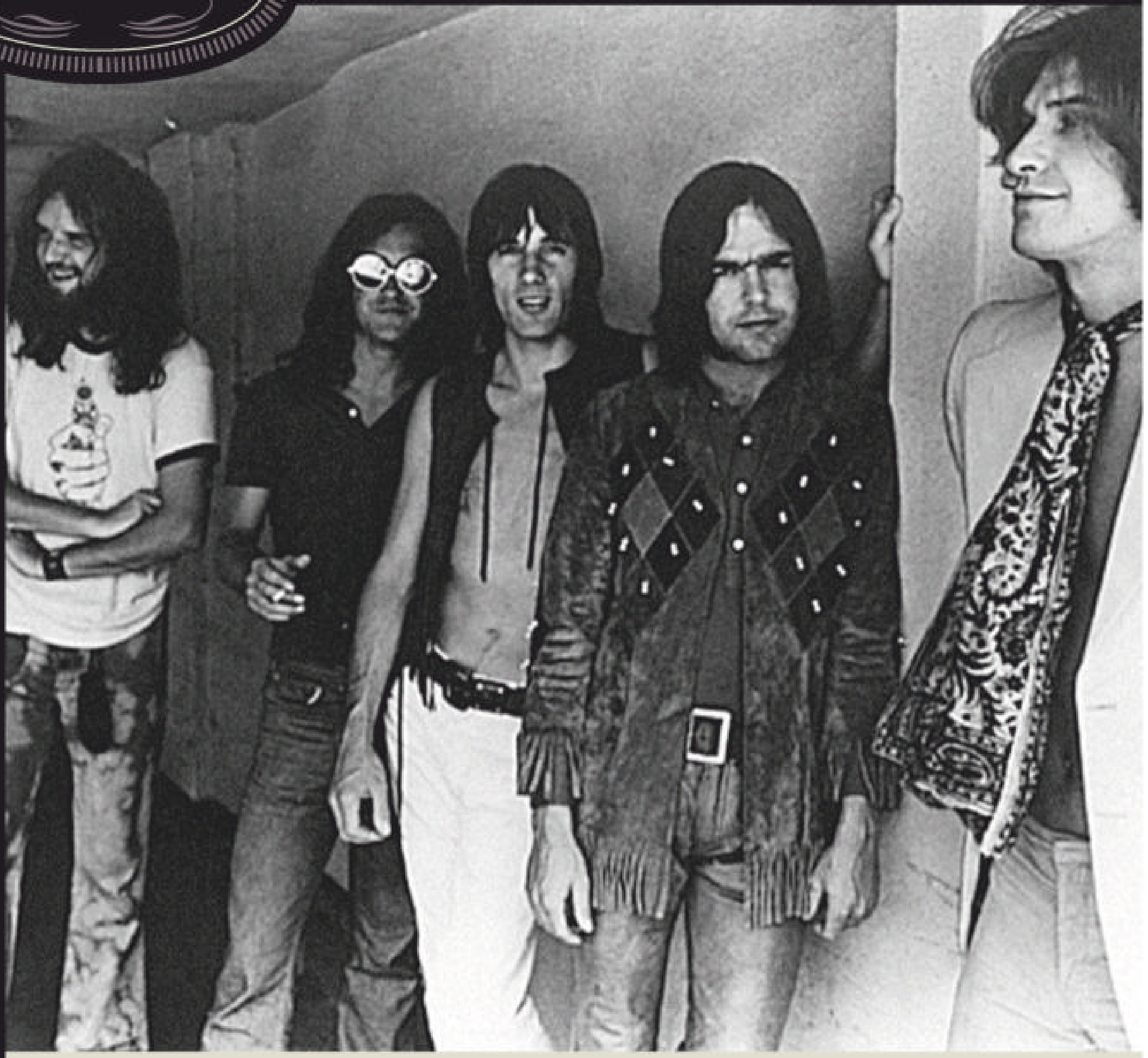
Manowar's fifth album, 1987's *Fighting The World*, is a delightfully vulgar display of power. Notably lean and mean, with a turbo-boosted production compared to previous records, it wallops your chops with such OTT highlights as the typically chest-beating *Fighting The World* and the blistering *Black Wind, Fire And Steel*. It also features the panoramic *Defender*, distinguished by narration from Orson Welles.

The following year's *Kings Of Metal* delivers such triumphant collisions between melody and power as *Wheels Of Fire*, *Kingdom Come* and *Hail And Kill*. While the laboured *The Crown And The Ring (Lament Of The Kings)* and the ill-considered *Pleasure Slave* dent the consistency level this time around, we close with the brilliant *Blood Of The Kings*. One of Manowar's all-time finest moments, it would later sound even better when they re-recorded the entire album for 2014's *Kings Of Metal MMXIV*.

During the three-year tour in support of *Kings Of Metal*, guitarist Ross The Boss and powerhouse drummer Scott Columbus left the group. This line-up change, perhaps coupled with the album's unprecedented success having led bassist Joey DeMaio and frontman Eric Adams to believe they could get away with anything, might explain the horror that greets the listener at the outset of this set's third album, 1992's *The Triumph Of Steel*.

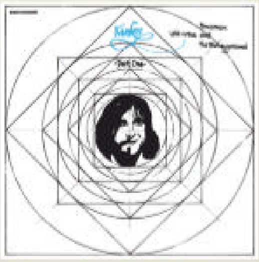
Achilles, Agony And Ecstasy In Eight Parts is a 28-minute conceptual piece. Like so many conceptual pieces, it neglects actual songwriting in favour of the story it wants to tell. The results are a low point in Manowar's career. What makes *The Triumph Of Steel* more difficult to evaluate, however, is the fact that the rest of its tracks amount to an album's worth of material in themselves. And against all odds, gems like *Metal Warriors* (which includes the extraordinary line *'If you're not into metal, you are not my friend'*), *Ride The Dragon* and *The Power Of Thy Sword* conspire to make the album more about ecstasy than agony.

Jason Arnopp



The Kinks

Lola Versus Powerman And The Moneygoround, Part 1 BMG



The brothers Davies bundle up rarities and live takes for *Lola*'s 50th birthday.

By 1970, The Kinks' star was on the descent, as the world moved on to new faces and sounds. On *Lola Versus Powerman*, a disillusioned Ray Davies doesn't just bite the hand that feeds, he leaves it to marinate overnight before giving it a good roasting. A time-capsule vision of a Soho London that has all but disappeared, he takes aim at publishers and the press, money men and management, and anyone he sees as attempting to strangle his creative freedom, painting a vivid, if bitter, picture of the music industry of the day.

The real hero of the piece, of course, is Lola herself, the glorious, fearless drag queen regarded with awe by Davies's wet-behind-the-ears provincial narrator. Way ahead of its time, *Lola* celebrates and defends the spectrum of sexuality before Lou Reed had even taken his first walk on the wild side.

Musically, the album is a mixed bag, from the knees-up, elbows-out music-hall romp of *Denmark Street* and *The Moneygoround* to the country twang of *Got To Be Free*, the stark, embittered rock of *Top Of The Pops* to the breezy *This Time Tomorrow*, none of it gelling particularly, more rubbing up against each other with a deliberate antagonism. Meanwhile, there are moments that have aged spectacularly badly. While *Apeman*, the album's other hit single is on the face of it just a story of a man yearning for a simpler life, it becomes straight-up racist when Davies insists on singing those lyrics in a cod-Caribbean accent. It's very much not okay. And there are six versions of it here.

Thankfully the skip button exists, because there's plenty of other extras to enjoy. This re-release is stuffed with demos, alternative takes, radio ads, mono versions, a particularly engaging version of *Lola* with the Danish National Chamber Orchestra and the Danish National Vocal Ensemble, and a new medley of forgotten track *Any Time*, which is plastered with a slightly awkward sound collage of long-lost snippets found down the back of the band's sofa. Best, though, are recordings of Dave and Ray Davies chatting over a cup of tea in the latter's kitchen, reminiscing about *Lola*'s inception and sounding, wonderfully, like the old dears on *Gogglebox*.

Lola was never a perfect album, and no amount added extras will fix that. But the gems that are there shine bright even 50 years on.

Emma Johnston

Five Finger Death Punch

A Decade Of Destruction – Volume 2 BETTER NOISE

Metal heroes display their prowess on new collection.

Three years ago, Five Finger Death Punch celebrated the tenth anniversary of their debut album *The Way Of The Fist* by releasing the compilation *A Decade Of Destruction*. Now, to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the band's formation, comes this second volume of tracks from across the band's career.

Seven of their studio albums are represented, with only this year's *F8* missed out. But then that's fresh in the memory. It's interesting to note the way the band have matured over the years. *Never Enough* (from *The Way Of The Fist*) has enthusiasm, but is a little halting, whereas *Blue On Black* (from 2018's *And Justice For None*) is more sophisticated.

Of real interest are the five previously unreleased tracks. Leading this charge is new song *Broken World*, with the familiar FFDP drive and melodic fire. In addition they've included an acoustic version of *Wrong Side Of Heaven*, which works impressively thanks to impassioned vocals from Ivan Moody. There are also remixes of *Bad Company*, *Trouble* and *Wash It All Away* (all done by members of Linkin Park).

FFDP have always been much more than rampant metalheads. The 17 tracks here showcase their diversity.

Malcolm Dome

The Stranglers

Peaches: The Very Best Of The Stranglers EMI

Schizophrenic charge through classics and curios gets a vinyl reissue.

They might have been the leery old pub lags of punk, but that meant The Stranglers had certainly learned to knock up an almighty tune by the time success gobbed wetly in their direction.

This 20-track 'greatest hits' (originally released in 2002), covering the Hugh Cornwell era and reissued on vinyl, skilfully dots their degenerate early masterpieces – *Peaches, No More Heroes, Nice N' Sleazy* – between classier and more considered 80s singles, to portrait one of the few bands that arrived in the punk age as melodically primed as The Jam and Buzzcocks, and managed to refine their way out.

The randomised track-listing doesn't help tell the story, presenting instead post-punk's very own Jekyll and Hyde. The bloodthirsty likes of *Something Better Change* and *5 Minutes* land jarringly between sophisticated 80s pop moments such as *Strange Little Girl, Skin Deep* and *Always The Sun*, momentum superseding plot. As charming and gentlemanly as it is to be offered a waltz around harpsichord heroin gem *Golden Brown* inside the first two tracks, for example, it's an incongruous swerve from the lascivious dub of *Peaches*. Particularly while one of their earliest signs of elegance, *Duchess*, languishes near the end.

Throw in a few deep cuts – 1980's proto-Smiths *Who Wants The World?* and B-side *Straighten Out*, a feral Buddy Holly – and it's a scatter-gun approach that doesn't quite suit such a smartly evolving band. But, bar curios such as French ramble *La Folie* and their over-egged psych-noir *Walk On By*, it makes for a consistently accomplished collection, albeit one clearly affected by moon cycles.

Mark Beaumont

Keith Richards And The X-Pensive Winos

Live At The Hollywood Palladium BMG

Multi-format reissue of Keef's side project in full flight.

Described by the main man as "the real stuff", the music made by his hand-picked backing band – featuring long-time Rolling Stones sideman saxophonist Bobby Keys, among others – has long held a special place in the hearts of Stones aficionados.

Released officially for the first time, this live performance from 1988 captures them on the penultimate night of a 12-date US tour in support of Richards's classic solo debut *Talk Is Cheap*. Slow-burning blues *You Don't Move Me* is the pick of the three previously unreleased tracks, but fans will delight in a thoroughly un-PC *Little T&A* and a spirited rendition of the Lennon and McCartney-written early Stones hit *I Wanna Be Your Man*. There's a loose, liquid feel throughout, as you might expect, but it's a scorching six-and-a-half-

minute *Happy* – complete with an extended guitar solo from The Human Riff – that backs up his claim that this is pure-strain rock'n'roll at its most undiluted.

Paul Moody

Roxette

Bag Of Trix: Music From The Roxette Vaults

WARNER MUSIC SWEDEN

Expansive collection of rarities from everyone's favourite guilty secret.

Although frontwoman Marie Fredriksson had retired from touring several years earlier, Roxette came to a tragic end with her death in December 2019. Fredriksson endured the devastation that a brain tumour inflicted upon her life, and along with partner Per Gessle found the strength to continue with Roxette until *Good Karma*, their tenth album, in 2016.

Drip-fed as a single volume per fortnight before becoming available on multi-CD and vinyl and in digital form, *Bag Of Trix* is a four-record collection. Its 46 previously unreleased or deleted recordings are taken from demos, alternative mixes, bonus tracks and foreign-language versions.

If it's Roxette's effervescent run of ABBA-meets-Heart hit singles that you crave, then stick with the abundant range of existing anthologies, because here we delve beneath the surface. Disc one begins with Fredriksson's crystalline voice accompanied by Gessle on acoustic guitar for The Beatles' *Help!* at Abbey Road in 1995 (later on, Per introduces an unplugged Abbey Road rendition of *The Look* with an excited cry of: "Okay Ringo!"). The glacial smoothness of Fredriksson's delivery enhances Roxette's seemingly effortless command of both mood and tempo, something reinforced by the irrepressible *Joyride* (presented here in US single mix), a sumptuous live rendition of *Wish I Could Fly* and *Little Girl*, and *Pearls Of Passion*, the latter pair among numerous lesser-known gems.

If, as seems highly likely, this third rarities collection empties the vault, then its unexpected consistency should only enhance the respective legacies of Fredriksson and Roxette.

Dave Ling

John Prine

Crooked Piece Of Time: The Atlantic & Asylum Albums (1971-1980) RHINO

Still smiling illegally.

When John Prine died in April, Bob Dylan's earlier praise was duly rehashed: "Pure Proustian existentialism – Midwestern mind trips to the nth degree." If only Proust had been that concise, that witty. Prine himself put it better: "[It] was real plain stuff that I wasn't sure was going to be interesting to other people. But I guess it was."

It was because of the way Prine told it. Donald and Lydia are a nondescript couple with nothing going for them except themselves, but you are hanging on to every line to see if something is going to happen (it isn't).

When Prine started out he was just another Dylan impersonator – there were more than a few. It took other singer-songwriters to recognise his genius. Bonnie Raitt (*Angel Of Montgomery*), Joan Baez, Bette Midler, Johnny Cash and the Everly Brothers all covered songs from his 1971 self-titled debut.

It may take you a while to get past that album, too, from the opening *Illegal Smile* ('*Fortunately I had the key, to escape reality*') to the aforementioned *Donald And Lydia*. The other six albums in this slipcase have a hard time matching up, but they all have their moments.

Hugh Fielder

The Gun Club

Miami BLIXA SOUNDS

Revelatory restoration of Chris Stein-produced second album, plus full demos.

Released on Chris Stein's Animal Records in 1982, *Miami* attracted flak for softening the Gun Club's ferocious blues-punk onslaught, although the Blondie guitarist insisted its country flavours were part of Jeffrey Lee Pierce's evolving artistic master plan.

Demos provided by Pierce's estate confirm Stein's assertion that Jeffrey "had the whole thing worked out in his head", the producer's main move reworking the impact-dulling double-tracked vocals to highlight the singer's supernatural hell-howl.

"I wanted to encompass a general feeling of doom," said Pierce, whose behaviour as he fought alcoholism and depression with heroin worried Stein and Debbie Harry (on backing vocals as D.H. Laurence Jr.) during recording in New York.

Robust remastering heightens every nuance of the band's feral onslaught, and Pierce's most evocative lyrics yet conjuring ominous bad America hoodoo, on titles like *Like Calling Up Thunder*, *Bad Indian*, *Sleeping In Blood City*, Creedence's *Run Through The Jungle* and Jody Reynolds's *Fire Of Love*, its smouldering despair couched in sheet-metal grind. Pedal steel enhances the lonesome darkness of *Carry Home* and *Mother Of Earth*, Pierce's chilling acknowledgement of his fatal self-destruction.

Two-CD and vinyl packages add demos of the *Death Party* EP, working titles including *Vampires* (coruscating title track), *Prune Dick From Mars* (*The Lie*) and *Pig Boys* (*The House On Highland Avenue*), plus *Walking With The Beast*'s blues-infused first steps.

Maybe now *Miami* can be seen as one of the last century's most shape-shifting works.

Kris Needs

Neil Young

Archives Volume II: 1972-1976 REPRISE

Ten CDs, 139 songs, one very singular artist.

Ask 10 Neil Young mavens to identify the golden years and you'll get 10 very different answers. However, few would argue that the period encompassing the live *Time Fades Away* ('73), *On The Beach* ('74) and the '75 pair *Tonight's The Night* and *Zuma* is among his finest. The unreleased *Homegrown* and Young's work with the Stills/Young Band and Crosby, Stills & Nash enhance the picture further.

Eleven years after *Volume 1*, *Archives Volume II* is built around the four Young albums, with *Homegrown*, *Roxy: Tonight's The Night Live* and *Tuscaloosa* here in their entirety. There are 10 previously unheard songs. Of those we already know, there are 19 "unreleased" versions; 13 "unreleased original" versions, 16 "unreleased live" versions and three "unreleased mixes". Plus *Greensleeves*, and Joni Mitchell's *Raised On Robbery*, which she sings in splendidly rocking fashion.

Complicated? Actually, no. Everything's in chronological order, and mercifully there's little track repetition. There's stylistic cohesion too. The period found Young coming to terms with the global success of *Harvest*, without sacrificing what made it so popular in the first place, while the return of Crazy Horse on *Zuma* pointed the way to perhaps the most significant of Young's assorted futures.

The unreleased songs join a few dots. The harmonica-drenched *Letter From' Nam* opens the entire collection and it's Young at his most mournful, but it's a look back rather than forwards. Yet while the sub-three-minute *Mediterranean*, the final unreleased song, is similarly spartan, it's infinitely richer, and a showcase for Young's rapid development as a songwriter. *Born To Run* (recorded contemporaneously with Springsteen's unrelated classic) overflows with the jagged guitar that would come to dominate much of Young's later work, but *Daughters*, originally scheduled for *Homegrown*, is probably the great lost song here. It's a gorgeous, band-enhanced fable of rue and optimism, where *'the daughters are dancing all day'*. *Frozen Man* runs it close, as does the piano ballad *LA Girls & Ocean Boys*.

Compiled with discipline, diligence and no little love, *Archives Volume II* is an immersive treat. It's primarily for fans, but even the most casual of acquaintances will find much to adore here.

John Aizlewood

Porcupine Tree

The Delerium Years 1991-1997 *TRANSMISSION*

Steven Wilson-led prog gods' early years get the high-spec box-set treatment.

Steven Wilson's attention to detail has long been one of his most endearing traits. Everything the modern prog maven does, he does with finesse and a slightly alarming degree of intensity. Thus his former band Porcupine Tree's six-year Delerium Records output has been remastered and repackaged into one of the most absurdly desirable box sets in recent memory (if, of course, you like this sort of thing).

Fans will already own the vast majority of this music, of course. But, as with every Wilson-led project, *The Delerium Years* is both comprehensive *and* sonically dazzling. It's also a fascinating record of the band's rapid evolution. There's a world of difference between the occasionally hokey bedroom psychedelia of 1992 debut *On The Sunday Of Life* and the supremely well-drilled, precise and powerful band showcased on 1997's *Coma Divine*, but Wilson's endless curiosity and singular vision drives every moment along the way.

Studio albums *Up The Downstair*, *The Sky Moves Sideways* and *Signify* tell their own story, as Porcupine Tree harnessed recognisable tropes from prog and psychedelia and gave them a state-of-the-art upgrade, embracing electronica's endless malleability and (eventually) the satisfying crunch of modern metal along the way. They've all aged very well, but it's *Signify* that feels like the most momentous batch of songs here – as they transitioned from one-man studio project to authentic, full-bore live entity, Porcupine Tree conjured some career-defining tunes, not least epic *Dark Matter* and the sweet paranoia of *Every Home Is Wired*.

Less familiar but often equally absorbing material fills in the historical gaps: mini-albums *Staircase Infinities*, *Insignificance* and particularly the semi-improvised *Metanoia* are all vital pieces of the developmental puzzle. For militant Tree lovers, *The Sound Of No One Listening* collects the remaining non-album singles and compilation tracks from the same period, and all of it sounds magnificent.

Also included in this classy package is a 140-page art book full of rare archive photos and other Wilsonian ephemera, plus a couple of pieces of original artwork that you could either (a) Blu Tack to the fridge door or (b) absolutely never remove from the box for fear of causing minor damage. Either way, this is a beautiful, meticulously conceived and executed snapshot of the single most important progressive rock band of the past 30 years. Admittedly the price tag of £125 is fairly eye-watering, but *The Delerium Years* is easily monumental enough to justify it.

Dom Lawson

Scars

Author! Author! *CHERRY RED*

Early-80s gold from neglected Scottish treasure.

Emerging from Edinburgh's post-punk scene ahead of The Fire Engines, and predating Postcard Records over in Glasgow, Scars served notice of their brilliance with their 1979 debut single *Horrorshow* b/w *Adultery*, released on local indie label Fast Product.

Protracted label issues and false starts meant that it was another two years before the release of their first LP, *Author! Author!*, on Charisma offshoot Pre. The abrasively ingenious guitar lines of Paul Research rival those of his Magazine/Banshees peer John McGeoch, and are given extra weight by brother John Mackie's inventive bass playing. Meanwhile, frontman Robert King delivers these songs with a desperation that suggests each breath might be his last. *Leave Me In Autumn* has a danceability that marginally aligns the band to their New Romantic contemporaries, while a pop heart beats beneath the deathly exterior of *Je T'aime C'est La Mort*. Other songs – particularly the melancholic *Obsessions* and *Your Attention Please*, in which King relays a three-minute warning of an imminent nuclear strike – are more unsettling. The majestic *All About You* was released as a single in advance of the album but unfortunately failed to register.

Author! Author! made the lower rungs of the chart in the spring of 1981, with Scars attracting enough attention in hip circles to warrant a place on the cover of *NME*. Alas they were more or less done by then, with King opting to go solo soon after.

This handsome three-CD reissue is packaged with demos, bonus tracks and a variety of live cuts that add to the legend.

Rob Hughes

Doro

Magic Diamonds: Best Of Rock, Ballads & Rare Treasures

RARE DIAMONDS/ROUGH TRADE

Quiet-loud compilation box from German 'metal queen'.

A woman fronting a hard rock band? Whatever next?! Dorothee Pesch was a relative novelty as the frontwoman with Dusseldorf fantasy metallers Warlock in the early 80s, but by the time they were renamed Doro in 1989 (a former manager having stitched up the rights to the Warlock name) she was increasingly deserving of the self-awarded title Queen Of Metal. Not always particularly heavy metal, we should stress.

This box set adopts a curious format, with the first disc devoted to ballads and the second to more upbeat material. Songs like *Fur Immer* and the live favourite *Whenever I Think Of You* show that the former style is a forte for her, even though a re-recording of *Love Me In Black* lacks the vulnerability of the 1998 version. Elsewhere, string-soaked material from 2004's album of symphonic makeovers *Classic Diamonds* might be a little too heavily represented for old-school fans' liking, but fans of the harder stuff will welcome live versions of Warlock thunderers such as *Hellbound* and more feisty stage takes on *Save My Soul* and *Hellraiser*.

One caveat: *Classic Rock* didn't have a chance to sniff the his or hers True At Heart perfume also thrown into this box set. Is that a deal-breaker?

Johnny Sharp

Chris Squire

Fish Out Of Water *ESOTERIC*

Cleaning out the Fish tank.

Of the solo albums from each of five Yes members released in 1975/6 – freeing them from the constraints of double and triple Yes albums – bassist Chris Squire came closest to embodying the core prog-rock values of Yes.

While vocalist Jon Anderson tripped into the 'cosmos lite', Steve Howe settled into a guitar technique master class, and drummer Alan White fell into a blue-eyed soul soup with soggy reggae croutons, Squire rounded up former bandmates from The Syn along with departed Yes drummer Bill Bruford, the band's new keyboard player Patrick Moraz plus a small orchestra, and demonstrated the full extent of his contribution to Yes.

With no guitarist to worry about, Squire turns up the treble on his bass and takes centre stage. But he doesn't dominate. There's a Mel Collins sax solo on *Lucky Seven*, a superb flute solo

PORCUPINE TREE: CLAUDINE SCHAFER/PRESS

from Canterbury scene alumni Jimmy Hastings on *You By My Side*, not to mention the St Pauls Cathedral pipe organ.

This Blu-ray disc has the original stereo mix, a new stereo and 5.1 mix from King Crimson's Jakko Jakszyk that restores previously buried parts, notably the orchestra, Squire's 2006 commentary on the album, and a vintage promo film of the whole ensemble featuring Squire's prog-rock kimono.

Hugh Fielder

Heavy Pettin

Best Of

BURNT OUT WRECKORDS/CHERRY RED

Def Leppard wannabes fail the test of time.

As all of us who championed this Glaswegian band at the time of their 1983 debut *Lettin Loose* must admit, they haven't aged half as well as the band with whom they were consistently compared: Def Leppard. Heavy Pettin protested when so charged, but had only two defences: singer Steve Hayman sounded more like Biff Byford than Joe Elliott, and their drum sound was so poor that had Rick Allen been in the band he would have quit. Otherwise, there are Leppard paw prints all over this: riffs, melodies, gang vocals, and – from 1985's second album *Rock Ain't Dead* – two songs (*Northwinds* and *China Boy*) that sound like rewrites of Leppard's *Billy's Got A Gun*.

This compilation re-sequences five songs from those first two albums among just four from the tissue-thin third, *Big Bang* (initially shelved, then allowed to escape in 1989), on which they experimented with keyboards – witness the risible *Born To Burn*. The tracks from *Lettin Loose* (what did they have against apostrophes?) are strongest – especially *In And Out Of Love*, *Rock Me*, *Hell Is Beautiful* and re-recorded former B-side *Love Times Love* – so it's a shame the compilers didn't also include *Roll The Dice*. Or simply give this up as a bad idea.

Neil Jeffries

Lou Reed

Magic And Loss RHINO

Bereavement-driven concept work endures.

One of the marks of a great artist is that their work seems endless at the time, and it's hard to pick out the road they're taking with albums that don't seem as impactful as their earliest work. Only later does the path they've taken become clearer. Lou Reed's career had already been going for 25 years before he released *Magic And Loss* in 1992. And while it had the marks of a late-period album at the time – a calmer mood, and reflections on mortality – it turned out to be just another milestone.

Magic And Loss is one of Reed's best albums. It might not have crazed highs like *Street Hassle*'s title track or the epic chug of *Sister Ray*, but it has a calm beauty of its own – although Reed's 'calm' is often only superficial', as in the barbed lyrical references to '*cancer*' and '*disease*' in the otherwise catchy *What's Good*. The album was a tribute to two deceased friends, songwriter Doc Pomus and Factory acolyte Rita, and it sees Reed in contemplative mood, writing some of his most direct lyrics, such as the sad and beautiful *Dreamin'* (as well as a brief sharp return to the Velvet Underground's penchant for body-horror stories in *Harry's Circumcision*). *Magic And Loss* – its mood often following on from the equally mortality-centred *Songs For Drella* – did well at the time, being both excellent and the next Lou Reed album after *New York*, and he was proud of it. And rightly so.

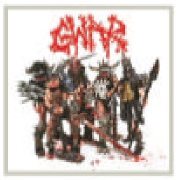
David Quantick

GWAR

Scumdogs Of The Universe

PIT

A load of scumbag joy.



To mark the 30th anniversary of their second – and best – album, GWAR have released a remixed and remastered version, thus ensuring all the mock-horror flavour is enhanced.

The self-appointed alien godly racketeers have always combined a thrashing musical style with an interplanetary sense of humour (*Rocky Horror Show* reimagined by Anthrax), but their early albums suffered in comparison to the bonkers panto-style live show. What this new version does is bring out much more of the power and musicianship than was previously obvious.

Thankfully this doesn't have any detrimental effect on the band's barmy dynamic. They're still essentially galactic goofballs. Tracks such as the slithering *Maggots*, the bloodthirsty *Vlad The Impaler* and the sleazoid *Sexecutioner* don't hold back on the comic-book mania. Now, though, you can appreciate that GWAR offer a lot more than just papier-mâché reject *Doctor Who* monster costumes.

The concept, about how these Scumdogs created a reign of terror on Earth, can now almost be seen as a metaphor for covid-19. But don't let that put you off. This album is fun and frenetic.

The updated edition is available on CD, LP, cassette and as a download. There's also a limited-edition box set.

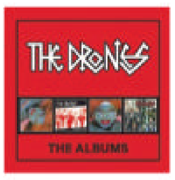
Malcolm Dome

The Drones

The Albums

CHERRY RED/CAPTAIN OI!

First-wave Manchester punks anthologised.



Like many of their Mancunian contemporaries, The Drones (previously pub rockers Rockslide) caught the punk bug after witnessing one of the Sex Pistols' fabled '76 shows in the city.

This four-CD box set is split evenly between recordings from their original lifespan and later reunion releases. The Drones are relatively overlooked in relation to contemporaries Buzzcocks and Slaughter And The Dogs, but their debut album *Further Temptations* (1977) cuts a distinctive dash somewhere between the pop smarts of the former and the rabid hooliganism of the latter. The full-pelt aggression of *Persecution Complex* and monarchy mauler *Corgi Crap* is tempered with a Ramones-style dash through The Ronettes' *Be My Baby* and a discernible Stooges influence on *Movement*, borne out by the inclusion of a creditable demo of *Search And Destroy* on *Rarities*.

The collectable *Temptations Of A White Collar Worker* EP is also here, along with a frisky unreleased Peel session, 1978 demos, and snappy final single *Can't See* (1980). Three quarters of the original line-up released *Sorted* (1999), which was weakened by sub-par production and filler but saved by top-flight tracks such as *The Phone*. *Take Shelter* (1998), a tight, belligerent live show in Japan featuring the lion's share of *Further Temptations*, rounds things off.

Rich Davenport

BEST OF THE REST

Other reissues out this month.

Pylon

Pylon Box NEW WEST

Dealing in stripped, dissonant mutant dance music, Pylon recall early Joy Division, PiL and an edgier B-52's. These four coloured vinyls boast 18 unreleased gems and come boxed with a handsome hardback. **7/10**

Various

Southend Punk Rock History 1976-1986 ANGELS IN EXILE

With echoes of Canvey R&B in their bones, Sarfend stalwart Steve Hooker and Alison Moyet (Sioux-ing it up with The Vicars) shine brightest here, before successive Punk 'n' Disorderly also-rans offer diminishing returns. **6/10**

Iggy And The Stooges

You Think You're Bad, Man? The Road Tapes '73-'74

CHERRY RED

Five feral, bootleg-quality live shows from the post-*Raw Power* Stooges' final touring throes boxed for hard-core fans. That said, rock scholars need to hear disc five's final Michigan Palace *Metallic KO* set. **7/10**

Specials

More Specials CHRYSALIS

A distinct broadening of the band's original ska template (due to internal power struggles) maintains the influence and appeal of this 'difficult' second album, now remastered for its 40th on four sides of vinyl. **8/10**

Toyah

Sheep Farming In Barnet CHERRY RED

Those who dismissed Toyah's debut as 'drama school punk' didn't pay attention. There's no cynical identi-thrash on this three-disc expansion, just committed vocal gymnastics over artful progression. **7/10**

Various

Rick Wakeman's 70s Rock Down XPLODED TV/UNIVERSAL

Rick allegedly compiled this 60-track compendium to "help rock our way through lockdown". Often via route one (*School's Out*), with occasional diversions (City Boy's *5-7-0-5*), it surely does the job. **8/10**

Black Sabbath

The End EAGLE ROCK

This triple blue vinyl souvenir of the final show of Sabbath's 2017 farewell tour was always going to deliver a hefty emotional punch. Featuring every Sabs classic that it ought, it's a fan essential. **8/10**

Kiss

Rocks Vegas EAGLE ROCK

Kiss's 2014 Vegas residency captured in all its unedifying pyrotechnic glory. Two yellow vinyls, one eye-watering DVD, eight big shoes, and more old-man tongue than you'll ever need. Or want, to be fair. **7/10**

Menswe@r

The Menswe@r Collection EDSEL

Singled out back in the day as "all that was wrong with Britpop", this four-disc set demonstrates that while their contrived style probably had the edge, their ennui-laced of-its-time content wasn't bad either. **7/10**

Racing Cars

The Albums 1976-1978 7TS

Classic bad timing. Despite their best efforts, it turned out that, aside from their irresistibly miserable *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* single, 1977's zeitgeist simply didn't require a Rhondda Valley Free. **7/10**

Medicine Head

New Bottles Old Medicine 50th Anniversary CHERRY RED

The raw minimalism of John Fiddler and Peter Hope-Evans's debut album, first released on John Peel's Dandelion label in 1970, is lo-fi blues-rock incarnate. Laden with charm, lovingly expanded, but it still makes *Baby Jump* sound like *Pet Sounds*. **7/10**

Swans

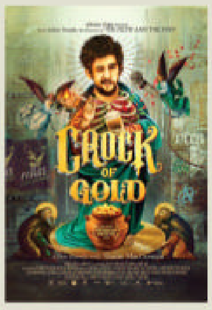
Children Of God MUTE/YOUNG GOD

The fifth Swans album retains its delicious grinding bleakness even at 33 years distance. Mighty, oppressive, it wears you down until you succumb to its innate beauty. Subterranean doom almighty. **8/10**

THE HARD STUFF
STUFF
BOOKS & DVDs

Crock Of Gold:
A Few Rounds With Shane MacGowan

Dir: Julien Temple



Punk veteran Temple raises a glass to perpetually pissed Pogues singer.

A bawdy, bittersweet, playfully poetic portrait of former Pogues frontman Shane MacGowan, *Crock Of Gold* is the latest filth-and-fury bio-documentary from punk veteran Julien Temple. Produced by MacGowan's long-time buddy Johnny Depp, this whisky-soaked love letter feels slightly self-indulgent in places, but Temple's inquisitive wide-angle approach will reward even casual fans of Anglo-Irish rock's most notorious Celtic soul brother. MacGowan's riotous life story certainly offers plenty of fertile material, from his romanticised childhood memories of Tipperary to teenage infamy on the London punk scene, insatiable thirst for drink and drugs, brief but blazing fame as an unlikely, gargoyle-faced pop star, then decline into addiction and sickness.

It's not the first documentary profile of MacGowan, but it is probably the most kaleidoscopic and detailed to date. Temple's immersive maximalist style – mashing up contemporary interviews with archive material to create densely layered collages of music and dialogue, fact and folklore, literary and political subtext – is well-suited to such an excessive life. In an inspired twist, the director enlists legendary illustrator Ralph Steadman to animate some of MacGowan's more scabrous anecdotes. Bono, Bobby Gillespie, Sinead O'Connor, Nick Cave and Depp all have cameos.

Temple is carefully, admirably non-judgemental towards MacGowan and his catastrophic appetite for destruction. But he does include revealing glimpses of the singer's fiery temper and prickly arrogance: losing his rag when off-screen lackeys fail to obey his demands instantly, or scornfully waving away innocuous interview questions posed by sympathetic friends. The documentary is detailed on political context, Temple diving deep into the singer's pro-IRA republicanism here. "I always felt guilty that I didn't lay down my life for Ireland," he says.

The heartbreaking contrast between antique footage of MacGowan in his fiery, lusty, razor-witted prime and the hunched, speech-slurring, wheelchair-bound husk of today lends this boozy cinematic ballad tragic undertones. That said, there is life-affirming warmth and humour here too, especially in the tender exchanges between MacGowan and his infinitely patient long-term partner Victoria Mary Clarke. The most glaring and depressing omission is that none of MacGowan's former Pogues bandmates appear in recent interviews. But for all its cautionary insights into friction and addiction, *Crock Of Gold* still makes self-destructive ruin look highly entertaining and oddly triumphant.

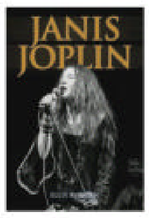
Stephen Dalton

Janis Joplin

Ellis Amburn

NEW HAVEN PUBLISHING

Engaging portrait of the troubled rock'n'roll icon.



This is the second edition of the 1992 book originally titled *Pearl: The Obsessions And Passions Of Janis Joplin*. It's one hell of a ride – vulnerable and open, raucous and brawling like you'd expect: clothes and sex and exhibitionism; ecstatic and self-destructive and very sad in places. Amburn writes like an old-school music journalist, one of those *Rolling Stone* cats from the early 70s: lots of gossip and capital letters and details about where Janis grew up and threw up, first-person, fast-paced recollection.

There are a dozen stories told on every page. "She fucked him on an expensive white area rug. At the end of the evening, she said: 'Hey, man, can I have the rug?' 'What for?' he asked. 'As a remembrance of you, man. It was really wonderful.'"

Janis Joplin is a sprawl of biographical minutiae and cautionary tales: Janis sat on a girder 300 feet up high, dropping bottles on people underneath; Janis hitchhiking to Texas; Janis exploring her lesbian side and sympathy for beatniks; Janis wearing funky blue jeans and no bra; later, Janis arguing with bandmates; overdosing friends with heroin; disjoined and dispirited; on stage at Woodstock in front of half a million people; flirting with Hells Angels.

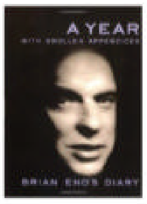
Scurrilous, no-holds-barred and with any number of former friends and lovers willing to share the tale, this is a classic rock read.

Everett True

A Year With Swollen Appendices

Brian Eno *FABER*

Reissue of 1995 journal featuring Bowie, Bono, Bosnia and more.



First published 25 years ago, Eno's diary now reads like a time capsule of more innocent Britpop times, before Blair and Iraq, Brexit and Trump. But beyond its limited hindsight value, this sprawling chronicle of the avant-pop professor's busy bohemian schedule is peppered with erudite mini-essays on creativity, technology, terrorism, politics and more. David Bowie, Bono, Lou Reed, Laurie Anderson, Elvis Costello and Paul McCartney all have supporting roles.

Juggling multiple creative projects, including Bowie's *1. Outside* album and U2's Passengers supergroup, Eno can be tetchy and haughty but also very droll: "Bono drives with the sort of abandon that suggests he really believes in an afterlife". Elsewhere he claims "all the world's major problems can be solved with either oyster sauce or backing vocals", and ponders: "Why doesn't anyone ask old Germans exactly how great it felt to be a Nazi?"

Between grim trips to war-torn Bosnia and tediously detailed family meals, Eno confirms his reputation as a connoisseur of carnal pleasure, forever leering at the "glorious, wobbling, kissable softness" of womanly breasts and bottoms. He even frets he may die without fully embracing "the honeyed chorus of bottom-slapping, tit-sucking, cock-pumping, belly-bulging lust issuing from the planet". Poor Brian, planet-sized brain but still the Benny Hill of art-rock.

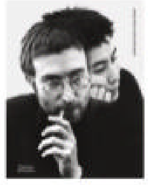
Stephen Dalton

John & Yoko/ Plastic Ono Band

John Lennon & Yoko Ono

THAMES & HUDSON

Memorabilia, unseen photos and words of those who made the album, 50 years on.



It would be against the spirit of *Plastic Ono Band* to describe it as Lennon's finest solo album, given the spirit in which it was created and intended, but it certainly represents his best post-Beatles work. Whatever doubts might be cast on the primal scream therapy Lennon underwent at this time, the release of energy it engendered made for some of his best work, including *Cold Turkey*, a song he originally offered to The Beatles.

The stories of Lennon and Ono's bed-ins, the sadness he revisited of his mother's death, have been much told. This volume, however, made up solely of the testimony of the pair and others who worked with them, refreshes our sense of what they experienced at the time; a flush of idealism once released from Fab Four obligations, the salaciousness

COURTESY OF MAGNOLIA PICTURES

of the press who were more interested in catching John and Yoko doing it in bed than in world peace, and, between the lines, the resentment towards Ono, the woman who stole John from The Beatles and cancelled the Sixties.

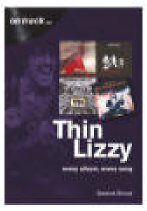
This is an 'official' book, so what you gain in access to previously unseen visual material you lose in independent perspective, but it's absorbing and revealing, and an essential companion to the album nevertheless.

David Stubbs

Thin Lizzy: Every Album, Every Song

Graeme Stroud SONIC BOND

The title says it all.



Another in the *On Track* series, following the template of a chronological catalogue of every song made commercially available, album by album, plus B-sides and subequently released out-takes etc. Although this book was completed before October's *Rock Legends* box set put a few more out-takes into the public domain, this remains a completist's bible.

It's thorough: the chapter on their self-titled debut features not only the original 10 on vinyl, but also the A and B-sides of their non-album single, four from the *New Day* EP (included as bonus tracks on the 1989 Deram CD), plus two that ended up on a *Hot Press* promo disc.

In addition to background notes and miscellany on each record, there's a potted band history and notes on members' post-Lizzy catalogue. Sure, there's a fine line between thorough and excessive, so dedicating at least 30 words to every song isn't necessary, but with this book you're unlikely to feel short-changed.

Neil Jeffries

Zappa

Dir: Alex Winter

MAGNOLIA PICTURES

Moving documentary about avant-garde rock's most famous figure.

Frank Zappa had his faults. He was prone to superciliousness, rather than soulfulness, and to sexism. He urged us to Freak Out but was a control freak himself, his music tightly scripted, his co-musicians mere 'trained monkeys'. After he abruptly broke up the Mothers Of Invention his music descended into decades of mostly uninteresting jazz-rock blather and pointless soloing. However, Alex Winter's documentary is wholly captivating.

Through archive interviews with Zappa himself we see that he was interested in editing and orchestral music long before he played guitar. His head was filled with visions of music in which pop, jazz and 20th-century classical music collided, his facetiousness belying his intricate brilliance as a composer.

He was at the epicentre of cultural LA, an influence on The Beatles, befriending John and Yoko. Disdaining pop, he enjoyed just one hit single, *Valley Girl*. His emotional distance belied a burning passion to create. In later years he distinguished himself as a campaigner against censorship and as a symbol of resistance for the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia.

Whatever you think of him, you come away from *Zappa* sad he died and glad he lived.

David Stubbs

Pete Way

Ross Halfin RUFUS

Photos of the late UFO/Waysted bassist, with tributes from his famous friends.

"This book isn't a history of UFO," photographer Ross Halfin states in his introduction. "Nor is it a history of Pete Way. It's a book of photographs and memories."

Way's history, as chequered as the ball-hugging trousers he wore on stage, was told in detail, at times painfully so, in his 2017 autobiography *A Fast Ride Out Of Here: Confessions Of Rock's Most Dangerous Man*, co-written with *Classic Rock* contributor Paul Rees.

But Halfin knew Way better than most. "At one point," he writes, "Pete even lived with my widowed mother." And while this book includes numerous anecdotes from Way's former bandmates and friends such as Geddy Lee and Steve Harris, the photos tell their own story.

On stage, in his prime, Way had every rock-star pose down pat. And off stage, or simply backstage, in that expressive face there was always a sense of fun, of a life lived to the full.

Pete Way comes in Standard Edition and £350 bells-and-whistles Deluxe Edition.

Paul Elliott

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Tour Dates

Socially Distanced Shows

HAWKWIND

London	Palladium	Feb 2

MIDGE URE

London	Palladium	Feb 3

Livestreams

ORANGE GOBLIN

London	Tufnell Park Dome	Dec 18, 19

For tickets go to www.hotel-radio.com/landing/orange-goblin-xxv-anniversary.

Regular Shows

AEROSMITH, RIVAL SONS

London	O2 Arena	Jun 23
Manchester	Arena	Jun 29

THE ALLMAN BETTS BAND

Cardiff	Globe	May 7
London	Highbury Garage	May 8
Manchester	Academy	May 9
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	May 11

BAD TOUCH, PISTON

Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Apr 7
Newcastle	The Cluny	Apr 8
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Apr 9
Dundee	Beat Generator	Apr 10
Manchester	Bread Shed	Apr 12
Leeds	Key Club	Apr 13
London	Islington Academy 2	Apr 14
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 15
Nottingham	Bodega	Apr 16
Gravesend	Red Lion	Apr 17
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Apr 18
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Apr 19
Newport	The Patriot	Apr 20
Exeter	The Tavern	Apr 21
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 23

RUSS BALLARD

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 21

MARTIN BARRE BAND

Wakefield	Warehouse 23	May 29
Durham	Northern Kin Festival	May 30
York	The Crescent	Jun 3
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Jun 5
Bilston	Robin 2	Jun 6
Hull	O'Rileys	Jun 11
Crickhowell	Clarence Hall	Jun 11

JEFF BECK

Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 21
York	Barbican	Apr 22
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 23
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 25
Gateshead	The Sage	Apr 26
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 27
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Apr 30
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 1, 2

BIFFY CLYRO

Liverpool	Mountford Hall	Apr 11
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 12
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 13
Sheffield	Academy	Apr 15
Southampton	Guildhall	Apr 16
Bristol	Academy	Apr 17

BLACK FOXXES

Exeter	Cavern	Mar 2
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Mar 3
Sheffield	Academy 2	Mar 4
Liverpool	Arts Club	Mar 6
Edinburgh	Mash House	Mar 7
York	Fulford Arms	Mar 8
Hull	Adelphi	Mar 9
Leicester	Academy 2	Mar 11
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Mar 12
St Albans	The Horn	Mar 14
Brighton	Hope & Ruin	Mar 15
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	Mar 15
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Mar 17

BLACK STONE CHERRY, KRIS BARRAS BAND

Bristol	Academy	Sep 9
Birmingham	Academy	Sep 10
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Sep 11
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 13
Leeds	Academy	Sep 14
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 16
Glasgow	Barrowland	Sep 17
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Sep 18
Newcastle	Academy	Sep 20
Liverpool	Academy	Sep 21
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Sep 23
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 24
Exeter	Great Hall	Sep 25
Southampton	Guildhall	Sep 27
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Sep 28

BLACKWATER CONSPIRACY, THESE WICKED RIVERS

Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Mar 13
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 9
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 17, 30
Cleethorpes	Rock Festival	Apr 18
Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 21
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Apr 22
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Apr 23
Carlisle	Brickyard	Apr 24
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 25
Stoke-On-Trent	Eleven	Apr 27
Birmingham	Academy 3	Apr 28
Oxford	Academy 2	Apr 29
Sheffield	Heretic Festival	May 1
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	May 2
Leicester	The Musician	May 4
London	Islington Academy 2	May 6
Newport	The Patriot	May 7
Gravesend	Red Lion	May 8

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL
JUDAS PRIEST, MERCYFUL FATE, DEVIN TOWNSHEND, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 11-15

BROKEN WITT REBELS

Leicester	Academy 2	Apr 1
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Apr 8
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Apr 9
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 10
Aberdeen	Tunnels	Apr 15
Edinburgh	Mash House	Apr 16
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 17
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 22
Brighton	Green Door Store	Apr 23
Nottingham	Bodega	Apr 30
Exeter	Cavern Club	May 5
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	May 6

BROTHERS OSBORNE

Birmingham	Institute	May 10
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	May 11
Cambridge	Junction	May 13
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 14
Leeds	Academy	May 16
Manchester	Albert Hall	May 17

PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS

Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 5
Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hall Fest	Nov 6
Manchester	Academy 3	Nov 7
Aberdeen	Unit 51	Nov 9
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 10
Carlisle	Brickyard	Nov 11
Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 13
Birmingham	Institute 2	Nov 14
Belfast	Limelight 2	Nov 15
Dublin	Grand Social	Nov 16
Bristol	Thekla	Nov 18
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 19
Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Nov 20
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Nov 21

CATS IN SPACE, VAMBO

Lancaster	Grand Theatre	Feb 13
Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 23
Birmingham	Institute 2	Feb 25
Sheffield	Corporation	Feb 26
Hexham	Queens Hall	Feb 27
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 4
Reading	Sub 89	Mar 5
Wimborne	Tivoli	Mar 6
Brighton	Concorde 2	Mar 11
Great Yarmouth	HRH Festival	Mar 12
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Mar 13
Norwich	Epic Studios	Mar 17
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 19

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

London	O2 Arena	April 15, 16
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Apr 16
Glasgow	The Hydro	April 20
Manchester	Arena	Apr 21
Dublin	3 Arena	Apr 23, 24
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Apr 26

CHEAP TRICK

Bristol	Academy	Apr 9
Manchester	Academy	Apr 10
Newcastle	Academy	Apr 12
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 14
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Apr 15

CHELSEA BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
CHRIS FARLOWE, CLIMAX BLUES BAND, MORE

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Mar 13

ERIC CLAPTON

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 14, 17, 18

CLEETHORPES BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS & FRIENDS, THE BLOCKHEADS, MORE

Cleethorpes	Beachcomber	Mar 21

CORROSION OF CONFORMITY

Dublin	Academy	Apr 24
Belfast	Limelight 2	Apr 25
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 27
Manchester	Club Academy	Apr 28
Southampton	Engine Rooms	May 21
Birmingham	Institute 2	May 22

COUNTRY TO COUNTRY FESTIVAL
ERIC CHURCH, DARIUS RUCKER, LUKE COMBS, MORE

London	O2 Arena	Mar 12-14
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 12-14
Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 12-14

ROBERT CRAY BAND

Newcastle	City Hall	May 1
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	May 2
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 3
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	May 5
Buxton	Opera House	May 6
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 8
London	Cadogan Hall	May 19
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 11
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	May 12
Basingstoke	The Anvil	May 14
Birmingham	Town Hall	May 15
Oxford	New Theatre	May 16

THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN

Sale	Waterside Arts	May 27
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	May 28
Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Jun 3
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Jun 4
Leeds	City Varieties	Jun 10
Lowestoft	Marina Theatre	Jun 11
Tewkesbury	Roses Theatre	Jun 12

CROPREDY FESTIVAL
STEVE HACKETT, CLANNAD, TREVOR HORN, MORE

Oxfordshire	Cropredy Village	Aug 12-14

CROW BLACK CHICKEN

Minehead	Giants Of Rock Festival	Jan 23
Kinross	Green Hotel	Jan 27
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jan 28
Hartlepool	United FC	Jan 30
Sheffield	HRH Blues Festival	Apr 11

THE DAMNED

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jul 9, 10
Birmingham	Academy	Jul 16
Glasgow	Academy	July 17
Manchester	Apollo	Jul 18

DEEP PURPLE, BLUE ÖYSTER CULT

Manchester	Arena	Oct 2
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 3
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 5
London	O2 Arena	Oct 7
Birmingham	Arena	Oct 8

DIAMOND HEAD, ROCK GODDESS

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Apr 22
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Apr 23
Chester	Live Rooms	Apr 24
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Apr 25
Cambridge	Junction	Apr 27
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Apr 28
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 30
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 5
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	May 6
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	May 7
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 8

REBECCA DOWNES, MOJO PREACHERS

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 25

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL
KISS, MEGADETH, BIFFY CLYRO, MORE

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 4-6

DREAM EVIL

London	Camden Underworld	Mar 14

Recommended

DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS, JERRY JOSEPH

Leeds	Stylus	May 29
Dublin	Vicar Street	May 30
Glasgow	SWG3 Studio	Jun 1
London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 2
Brighton	Chalk	Jun 3

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

ENSLAVED, INTRONAUT, OBSIDIAN KINGDOM, CROWN

Birmingham	Institute 2	May 12
Glasgow	Slay	May 13
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 14
London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	May 15

EPICA, APOCALYPTICA, WHEEL

Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 16
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 17
Bristol	Academy	Apr 18
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Apr 27
Manchester	Academy	Apr 28

ESOTERICA

Bournemouth	The Anvil	Apr 1

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

THE DAMNED

The reunited original line-up of Dave Vanian (pictured), Brian James, Captain Sensible and Rat Scabies add more dates.

See below for dates. Currently July 10-18.

WILL IRELAND

LIVE!

Birmingham	Actress & Bishop	Apr 2
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Apr 3
London	Camden Black Heart	Apr 9
London	Camden Underworld	Apr 10

FAITH NO MORE

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 7, 8
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 9
Birmingham	Academy	Jun 11
London	Brixton Academy	Jun 12, 13

SAMANTHA FISH

Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Mar 15
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Mar 16
Bath	Komedia	Mar 18
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 19
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 20
Manchester	Academy	Mar 21

THE FLAMING LIPS

Galway	Big Top	Jul 17
Liverpool	Invisible Wind Factory	Jul 19
Aylesbury	Waterside Theatre	Jul 21
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Jul 25

FM

Hull	The Welly	Apr 2
Wakefield	Warehouse 23	Apr 3
Nantwich	Civic Hall	Apr 4
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Apr 4
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Apr 10
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Apr 16
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 17
Newcastle	University	Apr 23
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 24
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 1
Reading	Sub 89	May 2

FREEDOM CALL

London	Camden Underworld	Jan 23

FUTURAMA FEST
PETER HOOK, THEATRE OF HATE, CHAMELEONS, MORE

Liverpool	Various venues	Apr 3, 4

GOTTHARD

London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Apr 21

GREEN DAY

London	London Stadium	Jun 25
Huddersfield	John Smiths Stadium	Jun 26
Glasgow	Green	Jun 28
Dublin	RDS Arena	Jun 30

Recommended

GUN

Cambridge	Portland Arms	Sep 13
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 14
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 15
Manchester	Night People	Sep 16
Keighley	Studio 5 Live	Sep 17
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 18

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

GUNS N' ROSES

London	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Jun 18, 19
Dublin	Marlay Park	Jun 22
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 24

HARD ROCK HELL NEW WAVE OF CLASSIC ROCK
MASSIVE WAGONS, BAD TOUCH, MASSIVE, MORE

Leicester	Academy	Jan 23, 24

HARD ROCK HELL PSYCH
ØRESUND SPACE COLLECTIVE, GORILLA, ELECTRIC MOON, MORE

Liverpool	Psych Club	Apr 17, 18

HARD ROCK HELL SPRING BREAK
KINGDOM COME, MADAM X, AUTOGRAPH, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Mar 10-14

HAWKLORDS

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Apr 1
Nottingham	Billy Bootleggers	Apr 2
Leeds	HRH Prog Festival	Apr 3
Hull	Adelphi	Apr 4
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 7
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 8
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Apr 9
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Apr 10
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 11
Norwich	Brickmakers	Apr 13
Leicester	The Musician	Apr 15
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 16
Hitchin	Club 85	Apr 17
Brighton	Komedia	Apr 18
Cambridge	Junction	Apr 19
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 21
Southampton	1865	Apr 22
Bridgwater	Cobblestones	Apr 23
Swansea	Hangar 18	Apr 24
Worcester	Marrs Bar	Apr25

HELLOWEEN, DIRKSCHNEIDER

Manchester	Academy	May 22
London	Brixton Academy	May 23

INGLORIOUS

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Apr 22
Swansea	Sin City	Apr 23
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Apr 24
Plymouth	Junction	Apr 25
Gloucester	Guildhall	Apr 27
Bristol	Thekla	Apr 28
Sheffield	Heretic Fest	Apr 30
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 1
Bradford	Nightrain	May 2
Glasgow	Cathouse	May 4
Newcastle	Riverside	May 5
Manchester	Academy	May 6
Buckley	Tivoli	May 7
Liverpool	Arts Loft	May 9
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 10
Newcastle	Rock City	May 11
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	May 12
Birmingham	The Asylum	May 14
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	May 15
Norwich	Waterfront	May 16
Brighton	Chalk	May 18
London	Malet Street ULU	May 19

WILKO JOHNSON

Portsmouth	New Theatre Royal	Feb 4
Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Feb 5
Peterborough	Cresset Theatre	Feb 6
Glasgow	Saint Luke's Church	Feb 10
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	Feb 11
Manchester	RNCM	Feb 12
Birmingham	Town Hall	Feb 19
Nottingham	Albert Hall	Feb 20
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Feb 21
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Feb 25
Bury St Edmunds	Apex Arts Centre	Feb 26
Bexhill	De Le Warr Pavilion	Feb 27
Poole	Lighthouse	Feb 23
Worthing	Assembly Hall	Apr 24
Shrewsbury	Theatre Severn	Apr 29
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 30

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

Aberdeen	Drummonds	May 2
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	May 4
Manchester	Night & Day Café	May 5
Nottingham	Bodega	May 6
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 7
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 10
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 11
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	May 12

KINGDOM OF MADNESS FEATURING TONY MARTIN

Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 10
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 11
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	May 12
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 26
Havant	Spring Arts Centre	May 27
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Apr 1
Wavendon	The Stables	Apr 2
Maidenhead	Norden Farm Centre	Apr 3
Colchester	Arts Centre	Apr 4
Swindon	Level III	Apr 9
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 10
Sheffield	Corporation	Apr 11
Leicester	Y Theatre	Apr 23
Sudbury	Quay Theatre	Apr 24
Wolverhampton	Newhampton Arts Centre	Apr 30
Bradford	Nightrain	May 1

ERJA LYYTINEN & CHANTEL McGREGOR

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 6

MAN

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 30
Derby	Flowerpot	Apr 1
Leamington Spa	Assembly	Oct 1

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Jul 16, 17

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Apr 13
Guildford	G Live	Apr 14
Croydon	Fairfield Halls	Apr 16
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 18
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Apr 19
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 20
London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 22
Plymouth	Pavilions	Apr 24
Brighton	Dome	Apr 26
Bath	Forum	Apr 27

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

PEARL JAM

They released one of the best albums of this year, they have a to-die-for back catalogue and they're great live. Be there.

London	British Summer Time Festival	Jul 9, 10

Oxford	New Theatre	Apr 29
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Apr 30
Cardiff	St David's Hall	May 1
Liverpool	Philharmonic	May 3
York	Barbican	May 4
Newcastle	City Hall	May 5
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 7
Manchester	Apollo	May 8
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	May 9

MASSIVE WAGONS

Glasgow	Garage	Mar 11
Sheffield	Foundry	Mar 12
London	Islington Academy	Mar 13
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 15
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 16
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Mar 18
Birmingham	Academy 2	Mar 19
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Mar 20
Cardiff	The Globe	Mar 23
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Mar 24
Exeter	Cavern Club	Mar 25
Newcastle	Riverside	Mar 27
Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 28

MAYHEM, MORTIIS

Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 23
Belfast	Limelight	Mar 24
Dublin	Academy	Mar 25
Glasgow	Slay	Mar 26
Bristol	The Fleece	Mar 27
London	Islington Academy	Mar 28

CHANTEL McGREGOR

Chester	Live Rooms	Jan 22
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Jan 23
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Feb 5
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 6
Hull	New Adelphi	Sep 17

PAT McMANUS BAND

Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Mar 5
Hitchin	Club 85	Mar 6
Sutton In Ashfield	The Diamond	Mar 7
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Mar 9
Bradford	Nightrain	Mar 10
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Mar 11
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 12
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 13
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Mar 14
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Mar 18
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Mar 19
Cymmer	Rhondda Hotel	Mar 20

FANTASTIC NEGRITO

London	Camden Jazz Café	Mar 29

NHS THANKYOU CONCERT
THE WILDHEARTS, BIG COUNTRY, THE BREW, MORE

Cleethorpes	Meridian Park	Jul 31

THE NIMMO BROTHERS

Clitheroe	The Grand	Jul 13
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Jul 14
Wavendon	The Stables	Jul 15

OZZY OSBOURNE, JUDAS PRIEST (2022)

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Feb 27
Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 1
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Mar 4
London	O2 Arena	Mar 7
Manchester	AO Arena	Mar 9
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Mar 12
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 14

PARADISE LOST

Leeds	Warehouse	May 1

PARTY AT THE PARK
KAISER CHIEFS, GUN, ASH, MORE

Perth	Lesser South Inch Park	Jun 26, 27

PEARL JAM

London	British Summer Time Festival	Jul 9, 10

STEPHEN DALE PETIT

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 5

PRETTY BOY FLOYD

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Aug 23
Belfast	Voodoo Lounge	Aug 25
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Aug 26
London	Camden Black Heart	Aug 27
Sheffield	Hard Rock Hell Sleaze	Aug 29

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT

London	O2 Arena	Jun 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 16, 17, 19, 20
Manchester	Arena	Jun 10, 11
Birmingham	Arena	Jun 13, 14

QUIREBOYS, MASSIVE

Bristol	Thekla	Jun 4
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jun 5
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Jun 18
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Jun 19
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 14
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Oct 15
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 18
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 19
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Nov 20
Manchester	Academy	Nov 26
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 27
Brighton	Concorde 2	Jan 21
Birmingham	Institute	Jan 22

RADAR FESTIVAL
DIRTY LOOPS, HAKEN, INTERVALS, MORE

Guildford	Guildford Park	Jul 30, 31

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR
CLUTCH, BIG BIG TRAIN, FOGHAT, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 16-18

RAMMSTEIN

Belfast	Boucher Road Playing Fields	Jun 12
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jun 16
Coventry	Ricoh Arena	Jun 19

READING & LEEDS FESTIVAL
QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, LIAM GALLAGHER, MORE

Reading	Richfield Avenue	Aug 27-29
Leeds	Braham Park	Aug 27-29

RECKLESS LOVE, DAN REED NETWORK, MASON HILL

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Mar 1
Cardiff	Tramshed	Mar 2
Birmingham	The Mill	Mar 4

GETTY

Liverpool	Grand Central Hall	Mar 5
Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 6
Glasgow	Garage	Mar 8
Leeds	Warehouse	Mar 9
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 10
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Mar 11

REDD KROSS

Brighton	The Albert	May 3
Bristol	The Exchange	May 4
Manchester	Deaf Institute	May 5
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 6
Glasgow	Broadcast	May 7
London	Islington The Lexington	May 9, 10

RHINO'S REVENGE

Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Jun 4
Kinross	Green Hotel	Jun 5
Chesterfield	Real Time Live	Jun 6
Winchester	The Railway	Jun 11
Horsham	REC Rooms	Jun 12

ROCK AND BLUES CUSTOM SHOW
MONSTER TRUCK, THOSE DAMN CROWS, MYKE GRAY FEAT KIM JENNETT, MORE

Pentrich	Coney Grey Showground	Jul 29-31

ROMEO'S DAUGHTER, SWEET CRISIS

Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Mar 12
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Mar 13
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 18
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 20
Newcastle	Trillians	Mar 25
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Mar 26
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Mar 27
London	Highbury Garage	Apr 10

ROSE TATTOO

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Jul 19
Birmingham	Institute 2	Jul 20
Glasgow	SWG3	Jul 21

JOE SATRIANI

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 30
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	May 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 2
London	Palladium	May 4
Gateshead	The Sage	May 5
Glasgow	Academy	May 6

Recommended

SAXON

London	Hammersmith Apollo	May 1
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 2
Manchester	Apollo	May 3

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

Oxford	Academy 2	Apr 6
Swansea	Sin City	Apr 7
Kendal	Brewery Arts Centre	Apr 9
Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 10
Nottingham	Glee Club	Apr 11
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Apr 13
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Apr 14
Leeds	Warehouse	Apr 15
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 16

SKINDRED, ROYAL REPUBLIC

Cambridge	Junction	Sep 23
Oxford	Academy	Sep 24
Northampton	Roadmender	Sep 25
Leeds	Academy	Sep 30
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 1
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 2
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 7
Bristol	Academy	Oct 8
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 9
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 10
Southampton	Guildhall	Oct 15
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 22
Newcastle	University	Oct 23
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 29
Manchester	Academy	Oct 30
Norwich	UEA	Oct 31

SKUNK ANANSIE

Cardiff	University	Jun 7
Nottingham	Rock City	Jun 8
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Jun 9
Newcastle	Academy	Jun 11
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 13
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jun 14
Norwich	UEA	Jun 15
London	Meltdown Festival	Jun 17
Sheffield	Academy	Jun 18
Birmingham	Academy 1	Jun 19
Brighton	Dome	Jun 21
Guildford	G Live	Jun 22
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Jun 23
Leeds	Academy	Jun 25
Bristol	Academy	Jun 26

MARIE KORNER

Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Jun 29
Leicester	Academy	Jun 30
London	Brixton Academy	Jul 2

SOCIAL DISTORTION

Manchester	The Ritz	Jul 14
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jul 16

SOUTHPORT BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS, HENRIK FREISCHLADER, KYLA BROX, MORE

Southport	The Atkinson	Feb 21

STEELHOUSE FESTIVAL
TOM KEIFER, H.E.A.T, PHIL CAMPBELL, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 23-25

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS,
THE PROFESSIONALS, TV SMITH

Bristol	Academy	Mar 4
Cardiff	Great Hall	Mar 5
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 6
Portsmouth	Pyramid Centre	Mar 8
Northampton	Roadmender	Mar 9
Norwich	Waterfront	Mar 10
Newcastle	Academy	Mar 12
Leeds	Academy	Mar 13
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 14
Troon	Concert Hall	Mar 16
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 17
Manchester	Academy	Mar 19
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 20

STONE BROKEN, PHIL X & THE DRILLS, THE FALLEN STATE

Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 18
Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 19
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 20
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 21
Cardiff	University	Apr 23
Bristol	SWX	Apr 24
Exeter	Lemon Grove	Apr 25
Brighton	Chalk	Apr 26
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Apr 28
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Apr 29
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 30

THE STRUTS (UNPLUGGED)

Sheffield	Foundry	Mar 1
Leeds	Wardrobe	Mar 2
Kingston-upon-Thames	Pryzm	Mar 3
Southampton	1896	Mar 4

GEOFF TATE

Belfast	Limelight	Apr 23
Dublin	Lost Lane	Apr 24
London	Camden Underworld	Apr 26
Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 27
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 28
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 29
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Apr 30
Inverness	Mad Hatters	May 3
Edinburgh	Bannermans Bar	May 5
Glasgow	Cathouse	May 7
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	May 9
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	May 13
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	May 14
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 15

THERAPY?

Brighton	Concorde 2	May 5
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	May 6
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	May 7
Manchester	The Ritz	May 8
Cardiff	Tramshed	May 10
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 11
Bristol	SWX	May 13
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 14
Nottingham	Rock City	May 15
Cambridge	Junction	May 17
Newcastle	Riverside	May 26
Glasgow	Garage	May 27
Hull	The Welly	May 28
Norwich	Waterfront	May 29

GEORGE THOROGOOD

Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Jul 23
London	Shepherds Bush Empire	Jul 25
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Jul 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jul 28
York	Barbican	Jul 30
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Jul 31
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Aug 1

THUNDER, UGLY KID JOE

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	May 13
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 14
London	Wembley Arena	May 15
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 22
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	May 23

ROBIN TROWER, SARI SCHORR

Southampton	The Brook	Apr 21
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 22
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Apr 24

SKINDRED

Their musical style might be difficult to pin down, but Benji and co are definitely worth catching in September/October.

See below for dates. Currently September 23 to October 31.

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Cardiff	The Globe	Jan 22
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Jan 23
Newcastle	The Cluny	Jan 27
Kinross	Green Hotel	Jan 29
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Feb 11
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Feb 12
Dartmouth	Flavel Arts Centre	Feb 14
Selby	Town Hall	Feb 25
Derby	Flowerpot	Mar 5
Cornwall	Tencreek Holiday Park	Mar 20
Havant	Spring Arts & Heritage Centre	Apr 9
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Apr 16
Hessle	Town Hall	Apr 23
Knaresborough	Frazer Theatre	Apr 24
Twickenham	Eel Pie Club	Apr 29

TYKETTO, GIN ANNIE

London	Highbury Garage	Mar 19
Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 20
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Mar 21
Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 24
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 25
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 26
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Mar 27

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Apr 26
London	Palladium	May 3
Birmingham	Town Hall	May 4
Bath	Forum	May 5
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	May 6

RICKY WARWICK & THE FIGHTING HEARTS, VIRGINMARYS

Cambridge	Junction	Apr 28
Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 29
Bedford	Esquires	Apr 30
Swansea	Sound Bay Festival	May 1
London	Islington Academy	May 2
Newcastle	University Students Union	May 4
Glasgow	Garage G2	May 5
Belfast	Limelight 2	May 6
Manchester	Club Academy	May 7
Carlisle	Brickyard	May 8
Buckley	Tivoli	May 9
Reading	Sub 89	May 12
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 13
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	May 14, 15
Leeds	Warehouse	May 16
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	May 19
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 20
Lincoln	Call Of The Wild Festival	May 21

STAN WEBB'S CHICKEN SHACK, SUSAN SANTOS

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 13

WHITBY BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS, HENRIK FREISCHLADER, KYLA BROX, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Feb 20

THE WHITE BUFFALO, LA EDWARDS

Bristol	Academy	Apr 19
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Apr 22
Newcastle	Academy	Apr 23

Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 24
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 26
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 27

THE WHO

Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 3
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Mar 8
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 10
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Mar 12
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Mar 15
Birmingham	RWA	Mar 17
London	Wembley Arena	Mar 22
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 24
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 27
Manchester	Arena Mar 29	

WILLE & THE BANDITS

Bideford	Palladium	Mar 4
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Mar 5
Truro	Old Bakery	Mar 6
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Mar 11
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Mar 13
Nottingham	Bodega	Mar 18
Bewcastle	The Cluny	Mar 20
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 26
Bristol	Thekla	Mar 27
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 16

WISHBONE ASH

Gateshead	The Sage	Jan 26
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion Theatre	Jan 27
Bristol	St George's Hall	Jan 28
Honiton	The Beehive	Nov 13
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Nov 14
London	Islington Academy	Nov 18

YES

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 16
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 17
York	Barbican	May 19
Gateshead	The Sage	May 20
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	May 22
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	May 23
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 24
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 28

YOU ME AT SIX

Glasgow	Barrowland	May 19
Bristol	Academy	May 20
Manchester	Academy	May 21
Newcastle	Academy	May 23
Birmingham	Institute	May 24
London	Kentish Town Forum	May 25

MIKE ZITO

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Apr 13

THE ZOMBIES

Harpenden	Public Halls	Feb 11/12
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Feb 13/14
Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 16
Glasgow	Òran Mór	Feb 18
Gateshead	The Sage	Feb 19
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Feb 20
Bristol	The Fleece	Feb 25
Exmouth	Pavilion	Feb 26
Ystradgynlais	The Welfare	Feb 27
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Mar 4
Wimborne	Minster Tivoli Theatre	Mar 5
Taunton	Brewhouse Theatre	Mar 6

THE CASANOVAS

New Album Produced by Mark Opitz
(AC/DC, The Angels, Cold Chiesel…)

Available on LP Collector green coloured and CD

«This collection might just be their best too, given it's got the most rock n roll feel of a career that has been steeped in it, and also a set of songs that by and large meet the vision.»
(Maximumvolumemusic.com)

« "Reptilian Overlord" will be well received by fans of AC/DC and Glam Rock/Hard Rock in general »
(Metal-Temple.com)

2 NEW REISSUES

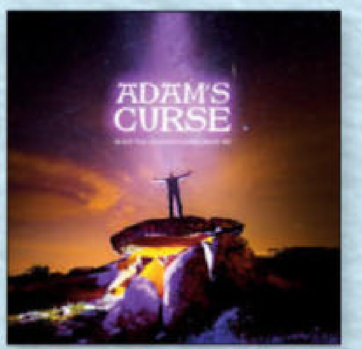
HEAVY BONES

First reissue of the unique album from American Supergroup featuring Joel Ellis (**Cats In Boots**), Gary Hoey (**ex-Allegiance**), Rex Tennyson (**ex-Hellion**) and the late Frankie Banali (**Quiet Riot**).
Produced by Richie Zito (**The Cult, Mr Big, Cheap Trick, Bad English, Tyketto...**)

HERICANE ALICE

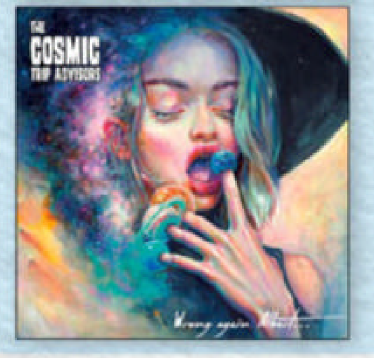
A MASTERPIECE FROM HARD-GLAM US BAND
With Jackie Ramos & Ian Mayo (**Bangalore Choir, Bad Moon Rising**)

NEW ISSUES WINTER 2020



ADAM'S CURSE

NEW ROCK-FOLK PROJECT
FROM BAT KINANE (**ex-GLYDER**)
Included 'Vibe For Philo',
a Tribute track to Phil Lynott



THE COSMIC TRIP ADVISORS

Double CD collector Edition
THE SCOTTISH NEW ROCK 'N SOUL BAND

Between Janis Joplin, Sari Schorr, Joanne Shaw Taylor, Lesley's voice takes it all! Strong album artwork and eleven catchy tracks brewed from a slick mix of blues, rock and psychedelia with some standout instrumental performances and a real star turn from the lead vocalist.
(Rockandrolltraffic.com)

JANUARY 2021

FLESH AND BLOOD

A bluesy-based hard rock /classic rock masterpiece -Remastered with 2 bonus tracks
Featuring: **Danny Vaughn (Tyketto), Al Pitrelli (Savatage, Alice Cooper…), Chuck Bonfante (Saraya, Drive She Said), Mark Mangold (Drive She Said, Touch…) & Mitch Distefano.**

STINGRAY

South African band from the 70's
in the style of Styx-Kansas-Boston
New full color booklet with lyrics
and New Masterisation

Shop: www.badreputation.fr 'bad' reputation

'Despite the inevitable restrictions, Black Stone Cherry are a joy.'

Black Stone Cherry

Live From The Sky

Even with no audience the Kentucky rockers give it all they've got.

★ Black Stone Cherry don't know how to perform live at anything other than full throttle. And they prove that when they play this livestreamed show from Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Despite the inevitable restrictions imposed by the current situation, due to which they're playing to a virtually empty venue, this band are a joy. Their energy and passion shine through in a set-list aimed at highlighting their new album *The Human Condition*. In fact they open up with a new song, *Again*, setting a dynamic pace for the 16-song set, and the momentum barely lets up as they dive into the more familiar strains of *Me And Mary Jane* and *Blind Man*.

The band pepper the evening with the occasional song from the new album. Of these, *Ringin' In My Head* and *Ride* stand out, and should become regulars in their live set.

One of the joys of watching Black Stone Cherry has always been their ability to be spontaneous, and this is showcased on both *Cheaper To Drink Alone* and *In My Blood*, both of which become extended jam sessions. This is where the band's deep blues roots come through as the musicianship and almost telepathic connection between the members raise things to a new level.

They close with the joyous triple of *Blame It On The Boom Boom*, *White Trash Millionaire* and *Lonely Train*, a stunning way to end a memorable show.

Malcolm Dome

Black Stone Cherry: energy and passion shines through.

The Bronx/Mariachi El Bronx

Halloween Dead Stream

LA hardcore punks and their Mexican alter egos share a virtual stage for the first time.

★ Trick or treat? We venture into cyberspace on Halloween, keenly anticipating the latter from the livestreamed show by The Bronx and their Mariachi alter egos. But the advertised 1am UK start is wrong – they forgot about our clocks going back, and by the time we tune in the show's already over!

No biggie – it's immediately ready to view on demand – but it adds to the sense that you have to suspend your disbelief in order to fully buy into this as a 'live' show.

It's also pre-recorded, allowing The Bronx to make this a first-ever show alongside their Mexican-styled counterparts Mariachi El Bronx, trading alternate numbers (and skeleton costumes and make-up) with them. But if you can stomach that slight tinge of pre-fabrication, it lends an effective quick-quick-slow tempo to proceedings. Vintage Bronx numbers such as *Heart Attack American* and *Six Days A Week* have a furious urgency that has us pogoing on our laptops before we catch our breath (and possibly head to the bar/fridge for a Sol) during Mariachi El Bronx jams such as *Norteno Lights* and *Right Between The Eyes*. Soon enough, you can kid yourself that you're actually standing in the muggy, dark little venue they've shot this in: get your mate to dig you in the ribs and spill your drink, stage-dive off the sofa and you're there.

Johnny Sharp

Wednesday 13's Halloween Spooktakular Variety Show

Los Angeles Whisky A Go Go

Wednesday hams it up while he and his band deliver a five-song set with plenty of variety but little finesse.

★ The pandemic has made fools of us all, but what to do when even your spooky schtick is taken away from you?

For those not familiar with Wednesday 13's music, his work with the Murderdolls and as a solo artist are two reflections in what must be a very black mirror indeed. For this livestream, Wednesday and his band perform five songs, including the rather good *Screwdriver*, which is actually a tune by yet another of Wednesday's bands, Frankenstein Drag Queens From Planet 13.

All of this is played out in the emptiness of legendary Hollywood venue the Whisky A Go Go, and is interspersed with faux and real adverts (most of them from the 1980s, at a guess), the band's new video of their cover of INXS's *Devil Inside*, and what can only be described as 'bits' by Mr 13 himself. In a variety of outfits, Wednesday proceeds to ham it up in a way that can best be described as hokey. Newscaster, heckler, action-movie star… No bar is set too low, no nylon wig too cheap for Wednesday to have at it the way a drunken student might try his hand at live improv. It's not without charm, but there's little finesse. They kill TV alien Alf too.

Philip Wilding

These Wicked Rivers

Maidenhead Denmark Street Studios

Rivers reduced to stream prove they have plenty to offer.

★ With the nationwide venue closures having poleaxed a British tour alongside Ryders Creed back in the spring, These Wicked Rivers use an empty Denmark Street Studios in Maidenhead to belatedly ignite the promotion of their critically acclaimed debut album, *Eden*. These audience-free performances are often soulless affairs, and while any rare gaps between songs do sound a little awkward, the band have sufficient energy and oomph to fill the void.

Combining the emotive grit of southern rock with a sludgy bottom end, openers *Shine On* and *Evergreen* quickly set the tone for the night. These two songs and others such as *Floyd* and *Won't Be Broken* are founded on generous hook-lines, while the slow-burning *When The War Is Won* and *World In Chains* TWR reveal an understated alter-ego.

If John Hartwell's vocals don't convince as emphatically as their recorded counterpart, then it's possibly attributable to the live studio mix. Visually, the lavish facial hair and the preacher hats worn by Hartwell and guitarist Arran Day maybe lend a certain cartoon-like element, but the sheer malevolent darkness of *World In Chains* and the album's show-stopping bonus track *Don't Pray For Me*, which tonight ends here in a squall of feedback, confirm that when at the very top of their game These Wicked Rivers have something special to offer.

Dave Ling

SIDESHOT PHOTOGRAPHY

TOGETHER WE'RE
LOUDER
LOUDERSOUND.COM
CLASSIC ROCK HAMMER PROG BLUES

Frank Carter And The Rattlesnakes

London Brixton Academy

Punk rock ramalama meets *Tron*.

★ "Oh my God! I am so excited!"

Not for the first time tonight, Frank Carter can barely contain his elation. And who can blame him? This, after all, is precisely the kind of band for whom live gigs are every bit as essential as breathing and eating. Never ones for staring at their shoes or considering their next poses, The Rattlesnakes detonate their first show in nine months. Not that you'd have guessed they'd been away that long. Such is their firepower that it feels like the ninth date of an extended tour.

But while the band are blowing up a storm, the delivery platform isn't without its hitches. Fans watching via virtual-reality headsets get a better experience than those using a smartphone, and both options offer the user the chance to choose angles and positions throughout the show. It feels like rock's answer to *Peep Show*, but taking a 360-degree view of the celebrated Brixton Academy offers a reminder that venues are as missed as the live music they host.

Such is the force of the band's delivery that any buffering issues become a secondary concern. *Tyrant Lizard King* tramples cities, while the one-two of *Devil Inside Me* and *Kitty Sucker* is simply devastating.

"I'll see you next year when we've got a vaccine!" yells Carter.

Consider it a date. We'll be there.

Julian Marszalek

The Howling Fiends

Chelmsford Hot Box

The twang's the thang.

★ Clearly, recreating the gig experience in these troubled times is no mean feat. Gazing into your phone as microscopic speakers tinnily distort is no substitute for ecstatically sloshing around in the multifarious bodily fluids of your closely-packed peers as an up-close PA cacophonously pulverises your viscera. So venues have had to get inventive to survive.

The folks at snug space Hot Box have refused to fold and have instead set up cameras to regularly livestream shows played before a skeleton crew. And it works. Performances enjoy an after-life; low-profile, no-budget bands can spread their word for next to nothing and reach a global audience with a relatively pro-shot show that far exceeds the limitations of fan-shot YouTube clips. More venues should get with the programme, as it's a music-sharing promo model that's surely got strong post-covid legs.

London-based Greek/Sardinian trio Howling Fiends suit their minimalist environment perfectly. Their mesmeric blend of surf-guitar psychedelia and Greek folk tropes recalls Dick Dale's *Miserlou* twisted through a distorting Cramps prism then slanted spacewards with a suggestion of Man Or Astroman? sci-fi here and a dash of B-52's spice there. Their fiendish charm is only intensified by being crushed through a router and spat into our shared dystopian lockdown from an anonymous alien location that could be Chelmsford, Greece or, more likely, Mars.

Ian Fortnam

'Everyman energy fizzes from the empty venue.'

Foo Fighters: bringing some much needed joy and happiness.

ANDREW STUART/PRESS

Foo Fighters

Los Angeles The Roxy

All the hits to celebrate 25 years of Foo Fighting.

★ One of the few precious rays of sunshine to have emerged in the last few months is Dave Grohl's series of drum battles with 10-year-old prodigy Nandi Bushell, which have been so purely joyful it would take a special kind of curmudgeon not to crack a smile. Good times are the Foo Fighters' stock in trade, so of course their lockdown set from LA is exactly the morale boost the doctor ordered.

As they amble on, chewing gum, apparently unaware that they're already going out live, they launch into a set stuffed with hits (and a couple of new songs) to mark their 25th anniversary as a band – not quite the celebrations they had planned, as Grohl points out wryly, but the next best thing until we can meet again. So while the silences between the songs are awkward – as are the numerous unsubtle shots of branded beer cans to keep the sponsors happy – the everyman energy fizzes from the empty venue as they blast through tight takes on *Times Like These*, *My Hero* and *Best Of You*, Pat Smear bounding around the stage with an infectious grin. "The most important thing right now is to bring joy, happiness," says Grohl, as he talks from the heart about the power of face-to-face live shows. And as they finish on a magnificent *Everlong*, still their finest, most loved song, that's what they've achieved.

Emma Johnston

The Soundtrack Of My Life

Singer/guitarist *George Thorogood* on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **David Sinclair**

Bad To The Bone rocker George Thorogood has been ripping up stages around the world since the mid-70s with his aptly named band the Destroyers. With more than 8,000 kick-ass gigs and 15 million album sales on the clock since he started the group in Wilmington, Delaware with Jeff Simon (drums) and Billy Blough (bass), Thorogood has played everywhere, from the funkiest roadhouse bars to Live Aid in Philadelphia and stadium shows with the Rolling Stones. He has just released a full-show deluxe version of his classic album *Live in Boston, 1982*.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

I think the first rock'n'roll song I ever heard was *Everyday* by Buddy Holly. We didn't have a TV then. We listened to the radio all the time, and I also remember hearing *All I Have To Do Is Dream* by the Everly Brothers. And Fats Domino, and of course Elvis Presley, Ricky Nelson.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

Satisfaction. I didn't give the Rolling Stones anything to worry about. Everybody's got to start somewhere. I started doing this when I was fifteen years old. I played pool parties and birthday parties and things like that.

THE GUITAR HERO

Brian Jones [Rolling Stones]. That was the first time I ever heard or saw anybody play slide guitar, which really fascinated me. Matter of fact, it's said that Brian Jones was the first person Mick Jagger and Keith Richards ever saw playing slide guitar. So I was in good company there. When I heard the first two Stones albums, when they were doing mostly covers of blues standards, rhythm and blues, I kind of got it into my mind what I was going to do for a living, someday.

THE SINGER

Paul McCartney and Elvis Presley are neck and neck. McCartney can sing anything in any key. Brilliant. And Presley was just a freak of nature. There was no musical style of which he was not a master.

THE SONGWRITER

In the contemporary era, Bob Dylan leads the pack. He got the Nobel Prize for Literature, didn't he? And he influenced The Beatles and the Stones. It's hard to top that. I'd also have to put Hank Williams in that same area. Every one of his songs is a masterpiece. And they're all recorded perfectly.

THE GREATEST BLUES PERFORMER

Robert Johnson. Greatest bluesman of all time. That's no secret. He played in more or less a contemporary style at that time, and he was better at it than everybody.

> **"Brian Jones was the first time I ever heard or saw anybody play slide guitar."**

THE ANTHEM

Bad To The Bone. Obvious choice.

THE MOST UNDERRATED BAND

George Thorogood And The Destroyers. You ever heard of us?

THE BEST GIG I'VE PLAYED

The next one we're gonna do. You have to set the bar high. That's the only way you're going to get anywhere.

THE BEST RECORD I'VE MADE

The last one, an album called *Party Of One*.

THE WORST RECORD I'VE MADE

I wouldn't say the worst. There's some that are not as good as others. We did an excellent job for Eagle Records on an album called *Ride 'Til I Die* [2003]. It was the first record we did with Jim Suhler [guitarist with the Destroyers since 1999]. And I was really shocked that it didn't get more attention. It would have been a great album if it came out in 1970. It was like thirty years too late. Everybody had started downloading, and people were getting the music for free. So we lost out on that one.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

You'd be hard-pressed to beat *Blood On The Tracks* by Bob Dylan. It's pretty severe. It came out a long time ago and it still rings real clear in my head. I can't get enough of that record.

THE GREATEST LIVE ALBUM OF ALL TIME

"Live" Full House by the J Geils Band. Their harmonica player, Magic Dick, is a pure, bona fide genius. You rank the great harmonica players – Little Walter, Paul Butterfield, Charlie Musselwhite… But Magic Dick was not only a great blues player, he was also a great rock harmonica player.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE

I like *Alley Oop* by the Hollywood Argyles [US No.1 in 1960]. I don't know if I should feel guilty about it. Come on, everybody loved that song. Every song on the radio was a big hit for me at that stage.

MY SATURDAY NIGHT/PARTY SONG

This Saturday is Halloween, so it'll either be *Monster Mash* by Bobby 'Boris' Pickett or *Haunted House* by Jumpin' Gene Simmons.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

Over The Rainbow [sung by Judy Garland] or *Beautiful Dreamer* [written] by Stephen Foster. They're pretty tear-jerking songs.

THE SONG I'D LIKE PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

I ain't gonna die. Who wants to think about that? I'll talk about how I'm going to live.

George Thorogood And The Destroyers' Live In Boston, 1982, reissued as the full concert, is out now via Snakefarm Records/Craft Recordings.

GEORGE THOROGOOD: DAVID DOBSON/PRESS; BRIAN JONES: GETTY

TICKETS VIA CALLOFTHEWILDFESTIVAL.CO.UK

CALLOFTHEWILDFESTIVAL

CALL OF THE WILD
ROCK MUSIC FESTIVAL

20TH-23RD MAY 2021

LINCOLNSHIRE SHOWGROUND
GRANGE DE LINGS • LINCOLN

röad crew
KILMISTER STAGE

THURSDAY
CRASHDÏET
JUNKYARD DRIVE
DOOMSDAY OUTLAW
THURSDAY FREE DAY FOR 2020 WEEKEND TICKET HOLDERS
OR AS A £30 BOLT ON OPTION FOR NEW WEEKEND PURCHASES

FRIDAY
PHIL CAMPBELL AND THE BASTARD SONS
RAGING SPEEDHORN
SKARLETT RIOT
FLORENCE BLACK
EMPYRE
BOOTYARD BANDITS
STEAL THE CITY

SATURDAY
RECKLESS LOVE
ROMEO'S DAUGHTER
WARRIOR SOUL
THE CRUEL INTENTIONS
FIREROAD
HELL'S DITCH
THE CITY KIDS

SUNDAY
MASSIVE WAGONS
Midnite City
SISTER SHOTGUN
LAST HOUNDS
REVIVAL BLACK
HELL'S ADDICTION
HOLLOWSTAR

SOUTHALL LAWLESS STAGE

MASON HILL
WILDSTREET
DAXX & ROXANNE

RICKY WARWICK & THE FIGHTING HEARTS
CONFESS
ANCHOR LANE
LYONESS
THE HOWLING TIDES
WICKED STONE

TIGERTAILZ
THESE WICKED RIVERS
NEW DEVICE
SHE BURNS RED
TAKEAWAY THIEVES
SWEET TEAZE

GLEN MATLOCK AND THE TOUGH COOKIES
JANUS STARK
THE HIP PRIESTS
COLT 45
SCRUFFY BEAR
GUTS

FOREST STAGE

VIP ONLY
RYDERS CREED
EY UP MAIDEN
SPECIAL SURPRISE SET TBA

KICKIN VALENTINA
KING CREATURE
RXPTRS
THE ROCKET DOLLS
THIRTEEN STARS
DIG LAZARUS
CROOKED SHAPES
BASTETTE

BLAZE BAYLEY
ABSOLVA
THE HERETIC ORDER
TORQUED
SKAM
ELEVATION FALLS
WOLVES AMONG US
KAYLYDE

LAWNMOWER DETH
VIDEO NASTIES
AVARUS
JOANovARC
SABOTEURS
FAITH IN CASINOS
KILONOVA
PHILO BEDDOE BAND

BUY YOUR TICKETS WITH CONFIDENCE
WITH OUR REFUND GUARANTEE POLICY

*CURATED BY BBC MUSIC introducing... LINCOLNSHIRE

COMPERED BY

GATES OPEN 2PM THURSDAY 20TH MAY • VIP GATES OPEN 10AM THURSDAY 20TH MAY

Marshall WDFD Warman guitars röad crew RPM gigantic MMH NATAL